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QUESTIONS

FAIRLY DEBATED: ^K

VIZ.

- I. Whether any Man may chuse his own Religion, or depend on others to chuse it for him?
- II. Whether a mere Certainty of some Church-Mens being of the True Religion, can give them a Right to impose that Religion upon others, on Pain of eternal Damnation?
- III. Whether all Supreme Powers, who are firmly persuaded that they are of the Orthodox Religion, have Authority from God to oblige their Subjects openly to profess the same, by the Sanctions of Rewards and Punishments?

IN TWO DIALOGUES.

By a LAYMAN; a sincere LOVER of
TRUTH.

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TO THE
RIGHT REVEREND
BENJAMIN,
Lord BISHOP of
WINCHESTER.

MY LORD,

WHAT chiefly im-
boldens me to give
YOUR LORDSHIP
this present Inter-
ruption, in addressing to You
these *Discourses* of a not long
A 2 since

DEDICATION.

since deceased Gentleman (whose Original Manuscript is yet in Being, if required) is my humbly presuming that they may not be altogether unacceptable; being actually written (and why never published I am ignorant) by Way of Reply to certain zealous *Literati*, who had publicly attacked YOUR LORDSHIP, not a little ungentleman-like, and withal, as many beside YOURSELF thought, very uncharitably.

To make bold with YOUR LORDSHIP's own Expression, a *Zeal* without *Charity*, is much worse than a *Zeal* without *Knowledge*. Abundance

DEDICATION.

dance concur, MY LORD, in this Opinion. But, as it is neither my Business, nor Design, to enter into the *Controversy*, I leave the Merits of these *Dialogues* to the Censure of every intelligent and unbiaſſed Reader.

IT may not however, with Submission, MY LORD, be improper here to infer what the Publiſhers hereof can vouch for genuine ; I mean the written Sentiments of a Gentleman univerſally allowed to be Maſter of very uncommon Judgment and Erudition, *viz.*

“ I HAVE peruſed the
“ two *M. S. DIALOGUES*, in-

DEDICATION.

“ tiled *Three Important QUE-*
“ STIONS *fairly debated, &c.*
“ I find them to have been
“ written some Time ago,
“ on another Occasion ; yet,
“ I think them not impro-
“ per to be published at this
“ Juncture, when the *Popish*
“ Controversy has been
“ stirred anew. The Au-
“ thor shews a good Deal
“ of Judgment, and seems
“ well versed in Ecclesiasti-
“ cal History, and particu-
“ larly that of our own
“ Nation, since the Refor-
“ mation. There are some
“ few Sentences which want
“ a little Amendment, as
“ to Connection and Stile ;
“ which

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“ which being corrected,
“ and nothing inserted in
“ the *Preface* but what may
“ relate to present Circum-
“ stances, I should think it
“ well worth printing”.

Aug. 16, 1735.

Now it is hoped YOUR LORDSHIP will find these hinted Defects pretty well rectified; and which is indeed all the Liberty has been taken with our Author, except omitting a few Passages, in his *Preface*, not now so very Material as when written.

WE have, MY LORD, also a *Treatise* of the same Author's Composition, bearing Title, *Some necessary* OBSER-

A 4 VATIONS,

DEDICATION.

VATIONS, *by Way of* ANSWER
to Mr. LAW's *first and second*
LETTERS to the Lord BISHOP
of BANGOR: They are pen-
ned with the same Spirit as
the following Sheets; and
shall, according to the Re-
ception these meet with, be
likewise presented to the
Public.

MY LORD, humbly kifs-
ing your Hands, and pray-
ing your Blessing, I beg
Leave to subscribe myself,

YOUR LORDSHIP'S

Most devoted and

Very humble Servant,

The EDITOR.

T H E



PREFACE.



THE present Revival of Religious Controversies, together with the Alarm which many seem to have taken at a certain late Treatise, whereof a very pious and learned Bishop of our Church (nay a most compassionate and charitable one, such as were the primitive Pastors of Christ's Flock) is supposed the Author, induce some of my Friends to be of Opinion, that these Discourses cannot fail of a favorable Reception, at this Juncture.

They were, indeed, written a few Years ago, on Occasion of certain severe Writings and Preachings against the same most worthy Prelate. I now first publish them from the Author's own corrected M. S. And (except some Passages, now not so material,

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terial, which I therefore omit) be thus introduces them, viz.

On a serious Perusal of my Lord Bishop's Sermon, concerning the Spiritual Kingdom of Christ, I was not a little surpris'd at the strange Alarms I found it gave to several learned Divines of the Church of England, who would be thought her truest Sons; since they have decreed it necessary, not only to ingage in the confuting and exposing divers Propositions and Passages, therein laid down, as destructive of all Ecclesiastical and Civil Authority, but also to do it in a Manner so unbecoming their sacred Character, in reproachful Reflections, even upon his Lordship's Person, &c. &c. &c.

From that Litter of virulent Pamphlets, which has been brought forth against his Lordship and his said Sermon, as if he had therein written down the Authority of the Church (as one of the Gentlemen is pleased to phrase it) and reduced it to too low a Pitch, it is obvious that the Writers are sorely nettled: And withal, that they themselves have screwed up the Pins too high on the Church's Side, and made her to want nothing of the Romish Infallibility, but the bare Name of it; since all the Arguments they make Use of, for her absolute, unlimited Authority
in

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In determining Matters of Faith (to which all private Judgments ought to submit, upon Pain of Damnation) amount to no more than what no reasonable Man will deny, viz. That, in all doubtful Matters relating to Faith or Practise, it is the Duty of every true Son of the Church, either to submit to her Decisions, or, if he is not satisfied in his Conscience of the Truth of them, that he do not disturb her Peace and Unity by any public Contradiction of, or unnecessary Disputes about them.

I was not a little startled to find those Gentlemen manifestly departing from the first Principles of the Reformation, grounded on Mens private Judgments, before that Reformation was carried on and supported, either by Parliament or Convocation; supposing it lawful to leave the Communion of the Romish Church, after it had been established here, as the national Church, for so many Centuries, by both the Ecclesiastical and Civil Laws of this Realm: Yet now, in their Disputes, they use the same Arguments, for the absolute Authority of the present national Church, by Law established, which the Papists have so often urged against the Reformation, viz. The Incompetency of Laymens Judgment in Matters of Religion;

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gion ; the Illegality of any Reformation, without free Consent of a Majority of the Bishops and Clergy, in Convocation assembled ; and their absolute Power in making Articles and Canons, not repugnant to Scripture, nor to good Order and Decency in Divine Worship ; of all which they must be the sole competent Judges !

This being the true State of the Question, I could wish, that most of the Protestant Dissenters, from the established Church, had not too much Cause to note these High-Church Mens Partiality to themselves, and to the Doctrines they believe true, in Opposition to those of the Romish Church ; that, when they have Occasion to enter into any Dispute with them, to justify their Separation from that Church, they are forced to insist upon the Rights of Laymen, as well as those of the Clergy, making Use of their own private Judgments in departing from a Church which they declare is corrupt, both in her Doctrines and Forms of Worship, as directly contrary to the Scripture ; and yet those Doctrines are required to be believed as Articles of Faith, which no Man may question, upon Pain of Damnation. On the other Hand, when these Men have Occasion to preach or write against the Dissenters, then their private
Judg-

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Judgment, *contrary to the Articles and Canons of the Church of England, is not to be the Rule of their Consciences, in their Way of worshiping God, but the Decisions of that Church must be absolutely submitted to, and subscribed, under Pain of Damnation.*

Now this, the Dissenters think, is a very partial and unjust Procedure, especially in a Church which owns herself to be fallible in what Things she may hereafter injoin, tho' she asserts her Certainty in all she has already commanded to be believed or practised: But, whether this Certainty can give her any Right to excommunicate or damn all others, who are not of her Communion, is farther considered in the subsequent Discourses.

This I do not intimate, on the one Hand, to exempt the Dissenters from all Obligations to conform with our Church, and obey the Civil Laws of the State, which injoin Obedience to her in all indifferent Matters, not repugnant to Scripture; nor yet, on the other, to justify them in declaring those Things, enjoined and commanded by the Civil Laws, not to be in themselves indifferent; but only so far to excuse them, as weak Brethren, who, since they really think they cannot submit to them without sinning against their Conscience,

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science, ought not to be forced, by Civil Penalties, to conform, but rather suffered to frequent those Assemblies where, they verily believe, God's Ordinances and Sacraments are had and received nearest to Jesus Christ's own Institution, whether it be effectually so or not ; because an erroneous Conscience (when it cannot otherwise be convinced) does actually oblige Men : And, so long as they continue in that Opinion (which they firmly believe to be right) they ought not to be forcibly compelled to renounce it, or to act contrary thereto ; for that would be to make them doubly guilty : First, of their erroneous Belief, if it does not proceed from insuperable Ignorance : Secondly, of dissembling with the Almighty, by acting contrary to their Consciences. And this our English Clergy themselves do urge against the like Penalties, whenever they are inflicted upon them in those Countries where Popery is the national Religion, and established by Law.

Nay farther, these High-Church Divines, if they will but impartially consider the Matters of Fact, and the several Steps by which the Reformation of Religion was begun, advanced, and (as was thought) at last perfected in this Kingdom, will find it did not proceed from a
general

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General Consent and Agreement of the Clergy and Laity, first to cast off the Papal Authority, and then by Degrees to separate from the Communion of the Romish Church absolutely; but it was purely from the private Judgments of the King and Queen then on this Throne, and from those Bishops and State-Ministers who, afterwards, came into their Opinions.

To begin with Henry VIII. This Prince made the first Advance towards it, in throwing off the usurped Authority of Pope Clement VII. What was the Occasion of that, but this Pope's denying, by his Legates, that Henry's Marriage with Princess Catherine (his Brother's Relict) was illegal, Pope Julius's Dispensation notwithstanding? And when King Henry, by Cranmer's Advice, took the Judgment of the most famous Universities of England, France and Italy, that the Marriage, being contrary to the Doctrine and Law of the Gospel, could not be dispensed with by the Pope's Bull; what were these but so many private Mens Judgments, different from the Doctrines then commonly received by the Roman Church, that such Dispensations were lawful? So, likewise, when Cranmer was made Archbishop of Canterbury, at King Henry's Nomination, and took upon him to declare that
Mar-

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*Marriage to be void, and that his said Majesty might espouse another, whom, and when he pleased; what was it but a mere Act of this Archbishop's private Judgment, without any Sentence of a general Synod, or Convocation of the Clergy? And, as to that King's assuming to himself the Title of Supreme Head of the Church of England, was it not from his own private Judgment, he first desiring that Title, and was therein strengthened by the like private Opinions of that Archbishop, and of Gardiner, and some other Bishops, who affirmed he might legally take upon him the said Title? And did he not, pretty soon after this Resolution, get himself owned to be so by both Houses of Convocation? But it is certain, that this Acknowledgment was not gained without some Difficulty and Struggle, and, perhaps, would not ever have been granted at all, had not the Prelates and other Clergy (found guilty of a Premunire for owning Cardinal Wolsey's Legatine Authority) redeemed themselves, and obtained his Majesty's Pardon, by a voluntary Tax, or Fine of 100,000*l.* and acknowledging that Title, in their Petition wherein they confessed their Offense: But yet, this did not pass the Lower-House'till Cromwel, and the Rest of the Council came over to them, and used cogent Arguments,*

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ments, to which they at last consented; i.e. as far as their Silence, or not daring to contradict it, may be taken for Consent. But, however, the Pope's usurped Authority was not totally taken away, in England, 'till near three Years after, when the two Houses of Parliament passed an Act for rescinding the Roman Court's Power in granting Bulls for Dispensations and Indulgences, and withal, confirmed the King's Title of Supreme Head of the Church, as having been already acknowledged by the Prelates and Clergy in their Convocations; which Act having had the Regal Assent, this great Point for abolishing the Pope's Spiritual Power (tho' then a Matter of mere Faith, or Belief) was passed into an Act by the concurrent private Judgments of the King and his Parliament; and it was, not long after, declared High-Treason, to refuse the Oath of Succession to the Crown with that Title inserted in it; and, for such Refusal, Fisher, Bishop of Rochester, with several Abbots and Monks, lost their Lives; beside the famous Sir Thomas More, of the Laity.

Thus much for the Alteration of divers material Points, relating to Religion, in that King's Reign, either with-

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out the Clergy, or else by their forced Assent to them.

Let us now proceed to that of his only Son, and Successor, King Edward VI. in whose Reign several greater Alterations in Religion had their Origin and Authority, from private Judgment, than in that of his late Royal Father; and this not from the Judgment of that Prince himself, who, being at that Time a Minor, not full eleven Years of Age, must of Necessity be under the Tuition of others 'till he became ripe enough to govern: So that all those Advances towards a farther Reformation, in the first Year of his Reign, as appointing certain Homilies, turning into English some Part of the Mass, and also reading in that Language the Epistles and Gospels, with the two Lessons, &c. were made by the private Judgment of the Earl of Hertford, his Majesty's Uncle, under Title of Lord Protector, and of Archbishop Cranmer, with some others of the Privy-Council, tho' much against the Wills of Bishops Gardiner, Bonner, and others, who, indeed, opposed all this to the utmost, notwithstanding they were at last forced to submit; all which was done without the Authority either of Parliament or Convocation.

Thus

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Thus Matters went on 'till the Meeting of the Parliament, which, without staying for the Convocation's Consent, passed an Act for receiving the Communion in both Kinds, and inhibiting private Masses, where none received but the Priests. I omit touching on the other Alterations in Religion; because, in Reality, they were finally passed by both Houses of Convocation, as well as by Act of Parliament. However, I cannot but here observe, that Images were expelled the Churches by Virtue of the King's Proclamation only, notwithstanding the Opposition of Gardiner, and several other Bishops of his Party; of whom three were deprived of their Bishopricks by his Majesty's Commission to certain Lay-Delegates, for their not consenting to those Alterations, which had been made in the Forms for ordaining Bishops and Priests, as well as some other Matters.

I pass by the Reign of Queen Mary, though she, by her own private Judgment and Authority, forbad all Preaching, and restored the Popish Mass, which had been abolished by King Edward's Liturgy. For she, having imprisoned all the Protestant Bishops, got a Convocation of her own Religion, who revoked whatsoever

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had been done contrary thereunto, during the Reigns of her Father and Brother; and their Proceedings were also confirmed by Act of Parliament, which repealed the late Act of Supremacy: And yet, in this, they must have been guided by their own private Judgment, contrary to the Laws already passed.

*So likewise, if we consider the Steps whereby Protestantism was restored in Queen Elizabeth's Reign, the Whole did also proceed from her own private Judgment, assisted by Sir William Cecil, Sir Nicholas Bacon, and other Protestants, whom she had taken into her Privy-Council, tho' the major Part of them were of the Romish Religion. It is, indeed, true, she made no Alteration 'till the Parliament met; but they as easily restored the Title of Supreme Head of the Church, as it had been before given up by her Sister; and this was effected without the Consent of the two Houses of Convocation, which, consisting intirely of Romish Bishops and Clergy, protested against making any Innovations in Religion: And it was for their refusing to take the Oath of Supremacy, that most of the then Bishops, and many of the dignified and inferior Clergy, were, by Virtue of
that*

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that Act, deprived of all their Ecclesiastical Preferments; and the Queen, by Advice of her Protestant Council, supplied those Vacancies with Bishops and Presbyters of her own Religion. But, as to removing Images out of Churches, it was done by her Majesty's sole Injunction, without any Consent, or Order, either of a Parliament, or Convocation, whose Authority she never ventured to make Use of, 'till she had so effectually purged the Church, that she could be sure a Majority of the Clergy would comply with the Reformation: So that it was not 'till the fourth Year of her Reign, viz. A. D. 1562. that the Convocations, of the two Provinces of Canterbury and York, agreed to renew the Articles of Religion, which had passed under King Edward; tho' with some Additions and Alterations.

I have been the longer, and more particular on this Subject, in order to shew how inconsistent the High-flying Divines Opinions, concerning the Invalidity of Laymens Judgment, in Matters of Religion, are with the Proceedings of our first Reformers from Popish Errors; who, if they should have observed all these Conditions, without which (as they suppose)

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pose) no one can be justified for leaving the Church established by Law, we all might have continued Papists to this very Day.

Wherefore, in both the ensuing Dialogues, I have fairly represented their chiefest Arguments, and put them as urged by a Romish Priest against a Protestant Convert, both whom are made to be Foreigners, for Reasons which every attentive and intelligent Reader will readily discover. Yet, tho' I have put down all our High-Church Mens most considerable Objections, I have not confined myself exactly to the very Words in which they express themselves. However, I have not, to my Knowledge, any Way altered or misrepresented their Sense: Nor have I thought it material to cite Authors; I not writing against Persons, but Opinions, the bad Consequences whereof must needs reflect upon the Principles of our Reformation; and, consequently, justify all Roman-Catholics, who may, thereby, be encouraged still to continue in the Errors of that Church.

*Upon the Whole, as well for their, as some of our own Church's better Information, I judged that my publishing these Sheets, at this Time, would not be
either*

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either quite unnecessary, or unseasonable.

I must, indeed, give my Readers Notice, that the Priest's first Argument, against the Validity of Ordinations in the foreign Protestant Churches, is not to be found in any of the Treatises I have before me: Yet, since it is more a propos, as to the Person against whom the Priest here urges it, I deemed my inserting it not impertinent; especially, because it was urged against the Reformation in Germany and France, by the late Bishop of Meaux, in his Treatise, intituled the Variations of the pretended Protestants from the Catholic Church; and which has been since, I suppose, borrowed from him, and made Use of by some others of our late High-Flyers, in their Books and Pamphlets against Presbyterian Baptism. But tho' in this, they differ not only from the Belief and Practise of the English Church, which agrees with that of Rome in this Doctrine (owned for true by most of the primitive Fathers) that Baptism performed by mere Laymen, in Cases of Necessity, is not to be repeated; yet, whether the said Gentlemen have not asserted the contrary, rather thro' their immoderate

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derate Zeal and Animosity against the Dissenters, than from any real Aversion to the Romish Doctrines, may be justly doubted; because, in many other Points, they come nearer them than any other Sort of Church-Men, who are also as much for that by Law established, as themselves.

But, that my Readers may be satisfied of my Intention to deal as fairly with those of the contrary Opinion, I only desire that, in all the Arguments and Objections, made Use of by the Romish Priest against the Protestant Convert, they will, instead of the Church of Rome, suppose that of England to be in most Places intended; and, for Infallibility, they may read absolute, unerring Certainty, as one and the same in Effect; and, instead of the Council of Trent, suppose the Articles and Canons made in Convocation: And then, let them judge, whether that saying of the Satyrist may not be justly applied to these Writers:

*Mutato Nomine, de te
Fabula narratur.*

Now, let the Reader consider, whether all those Arguments and Objections there used,

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used, and urged for the public Judgment of a Synod, or Council of the Clergy, in all Matters relating to Reformation of Religion, as absolutely necessary to make it lawful; as also for the Necessity of some appointed and acknowledged Interpreter, or Interpreters, of all doubtful Places of Scripture, without which no Layman ought to determine the Sense of them: And, whether all Excommunications and Absolutions, howsoever executed by Bishops and Priests here on Earth, are not affirmed to be immediately ratified in Heaven: Also, whether the Church of England's absolute and indefinite Authority, in imposing whatever Ceremonies she shall hereafter judge requisite, how numerous and burdensome soever they may prove to be: And likewise, whether she has such absolute Authority in Matters of Faith, as that whatever doubtful Point she shall, hereafter, determine to be believed, must be received, under Pain of eternal Damnation: Let the Reader, I say, but consider the Arguments, as they are here made Use of by the Priest, and compare them with some of our High-flying Performances, lately come to Light, and then judge, whether they will not also serve to justify every Corruption of the Romish Church;

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Church; and, consequently, instead of bringing any Roman-Catholics over to the Church of England's Communion, they may not far rather serve as sufficient Arguments to keep them where they are, when they see so many learned Divines (who pass under the Denomination of Protestants) employing the very same Arguments to maintain the Authority of that Church whereof they pretend themselves Ministers; and which very Arguments the Papists have, ever since the Reformation, constantly used, in their Writings and Discourses, in order to destroy that, and establish their own.

Finally, whether that absolute Power, they ascribe to all Supreme, Orthodox Princes, and States, of inflicting such Penalties, less than Death, as they shall judge may prove sufficient to reclaim Heretics and Schismatics, by making them consider the Force of the Arguments proposed to them, in order to their Conversion, will not also justify (if not the Spanish Inquisition, yet) at least the late French Method of Conversion by Dragoons, who had no Commission to take away Peoples Lives, but only to quarter upon them, spoil their Goods, outrage and torment their Persons, 'till they would subscribe to all the Articles of the Trentine Creed. Nor, indeed, is it other

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other than a vain Restriction, which is made Use of by those of the Romish Church, and by these Gentlemen, that this Power is not to be exercised, except by Orthodox and Catholic Princes and States, and not by Heretics and Schismatics. I desire, therefore, they would shew me any such Civil Powers, in Christendom, who do not believe themselves to be truly Catholic and Orthodox, in their own Judgments, how widely soever they differ from each other; and yet, their private Judgments must be the only Rule of Faith and Practise in all those Territories which are under their absolute Dominion, if they have any such Authority derived from God, or Christ, either in the Old or New Testament.

*“ Thus far our Author : Of whom we
“ shall, at present, only animadvert,
“ That, over and above the smart Tract,
“ mentioned in the Dedication, we have
“ also some other valuable Pieces of the
“ same learned Gentleman's Writing, con-
“ cerning MAGNA CHARTA; HEREDI-
“ TARY RIGHT; the LEGISLATIVE
“ POWER, &c. &c. whereto his Name
“ shall be prefixed, when we publish those
“ his Posthumous WORKS; as we have
“ Thoughts of doing very speedily”.*

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THE
First DIALOGUE.



P. a *Popish* PRIEST, and *R.* a *French*
REFUGEE.

P.  OUR humble Servant,
Sir ; I am glad to meet
one of my Townsmen
in this Place. Are you
not, pray, that *French*
Gentleman, who, some
Time ago, left *France* on the Account of
Religion, and came from *Bordeaux* ?
You are, if I forget not, *M. *****.

R. Yes, *Sir*, I am the very Person ;
and you are also right as to my Name :

B

I have

I have been now near a Twelvemonth in *England*.

P. Will you permit me, *Sir*, to ask you one Question more? Did not you, as well as your Father, and your whole Family, once subscribe to all the Articles of Faith, as laid down in our Creed ordained by the Council of *Trent*?

R. I did, *Sir*: Yet it was by my Father's Command, to avoid a Dungeon, or the Gallies, on a Refusal: But, because that did not at all convince me of the Truth of the *Romish-Catholic* Religion, I could not enjoy any Quiet in my Conscience till I left its Communion, and returned to That wherein, from my Infancy, I had been educated.

P. Conscience? Alas! That is the Pretext of all who change their Religion, tho' it be for a worse: And as for Education, perhaps, it may be some Excuse before Men, yet will it not be any before *GOD*, who requires all should come to the Knowledge of the Truth, that they may be saved: But then it must be in his Way, not out of the Pale of *Christ's* visible *Catholic* Church, of which he himself is the Head; and none can be Members of that his mystical Body, but only those, who are
united

united to him by a true and lively Faith.

R. I own what you say to be true; and hope I am within the Pale of the Church, and consequently in a State of Salvation.

P. I am very sorry you should be under so gross a Mistake as to think so, when you have left the Communion of our most holy *Catholic* Church, her Bishops and Priests, and are relapsed into a Religion, wherein there are no truly-ordained Church-Governors; for you know that, without a certain, uninterrupted Succession of such Rulers, there can be no true Priests, and consequently no true Sacraments; and, without these, there can be no Salvation.

R. Pray, *Sir*, How do you prove that? But, I must tell you plainly, I did not expect to hear such Doctrine declared so openly in a Kingdom, where the *Reformed Religion* is the only One established by Law.

P. I perceive you are yet a Stranger to the Customs of *England*, where there is a general Toleration for Men of all Persuasions, who can but call themselves *Protestants*, and say they believe in the *Trinity*, and that *Jesus Christ* is the Son of God; and tho' we *Catholics* are

the only *Christians* inhibited all public Professions of our Religion in any consecrated Churches or Chapels, yet (God be thanked) either in private Assemblies, or at the Chapels of foreign Embassadors, we can hear Mass every Day in the Week: And, as for Sermons, they are supplied by the orthodox Exhortations of such Priests, or Missionaries, as are yearly sent over hither; so that there is scarce a *Catholic* Family of Note here without one of them; and they who cannot maintain one themselves, must contribute towards the Support of him who is their Confessor, and administers to them the Holy Sacrament of the Altar, at convenient Seasons.

R. Indeed, you tell me what I did not know before; and I think it a great Indulgence in the Government to allow you so much more Liberty than *Protestants* can have under a *Popish* Government, where it is Penal to have any Religious Meetings, even in their own private Families; much more to frequent the Oratories of *Protestant* Embassadors or Envoys. But, pray, let us return to the Matter on which we began: What is the Reason why you think the Religion of the *Protestants*, professed in *England*, to be no safe Way to Salvation?

P. Why?

P. Why? Because, in coming over to them, you preferred your own *private Judgment*, in some of the grand Articles of Salvation, before the Authority of that Church to which you was outwardly reconciled, by subscribing to her Creed, and receiving her Sacraments of Confession and the Eucharist, which I presume you did while you was in her Communion.

R. Well, suppose I did; yet if I was never satisfied in my Conscience of the Truth of that Religion, what would you have me do but go over to that which my own *Judgment* convinced me was the most Orthodox? And when I was of your Church, how would you have had me behave myself in it, sincerely, or only in outward Shew, and hypocritically? If the former, could I do that upon any other Account than because, in my own *private Judgment*, I was fully satisfied, that the *Roman-Catholic* Church was the only true one; and in which alone (as you say) eternal Salvation is to be had?

P. I grant, indeed, no Man can be forced to believe what it is not possible for him to be convinced of, nor can any one have true Faith without real turning of their Heart; and that must be owing

to a thorough Conviction, from some rational Grounds, of the Falsehood of the Religion he before professed, and of the Truth of that which he afterwards embraces. But, however, it is his Duty, under Pain of Damnation, to listen first to those Arguments and Reasons proposed to him by his Bishop, or *Catholic* Priest, and not of his own Head to leave the Communion of the Church in which he has been baptized, or, by his own Consent, made himself a Member of; and I doubt not but the Reasons which such Bishop, or Priest, shall give him to continue steadfast in that Communion will prove so unanswerable, that the Inquirer, without wilful Ignorance, or Obstinacy, will not be able to refuse them: Therefore, pray tell me truly, whether you ever proposed your Objections, why you could not remain a true *Catholic*, to any Bishop or Priest of our Church before you left it, and returned to the Profession of your former *Heretical* Opinions?

R. Yes, I assure you I did; but the Answers given to them were no ways satisfactory to my Conscience and Judgment, how convincing soever they might have been to your's. And as for wilful Ignorance and Obstinacy, with which you

you charge me, in refusing to be convinced by them, I had all the temporal Motives imaginable to the contrary; except you can suppose me so foolish as to prefer the Loss of my Fortune, Imprisonment, or being sent to the Gallies, if I continued in *France*, to the more promising Advantages I might otherwise have expected in this Life. Nay, I am still ready to hear any Reasons you shall be able to give, whereby to convince me, that it is my Duty to return yet to the Communion of your *Romish* Church.

P. I will accept your Offer gladly, and believe I shall do it to your Satisfaction; unless you pertinaciously resolve to shut the Eyes of your Understanding against the most manifest Light of Truth. But, pray first answer me one *Query*: Suppose you had been allowed the Liberty of your Religion in *France*, would you have continued there in that *Hugonot* Communion wherein you was educated, or have come over into *England*, and joined with that which now stiles herself the *Episcopal* Church, as by Law established?

R. I will frankly confess to you, that (if I might have been permitted) I should still have continued in Communion with the Ministers and People you there term

Hugonots, as being, in my Judgment, the safest Way to Salvation; since nothing was taught by them but what is agreeable to the Holy Scriptures, and was maintained by the Primitive Church, for the first three or four hundred Years after Christ; and then, indeed, I own the corrupt Doctrines of the *Romish* Church began to creep in, tho' by slow Degrees (some in one Age, and some in another) till about the 11th or 12th Century, when most of them were taught and practised; tho' not then neither fully confirmed, as fundamental Articles of Faith, till the more modern Councils of *Constance* and *Trent*, wherein all those Errors were definitively established by a new Creed drawn up for that Purpose, as you have already intimated.

P. I perceive you have been taught a great many false, *Heretical* Opinions, either by your own Parents in your Youth, or by reading *Hugonot* Books, and conversing with their Ministers, since you was grown a Man. But among them there is one Error you must recant, if you will join in Communion with that Part of the Clergy and Laity of the *English* Church which are now most in Vogue, and are, indeed, more learned than

than the rest, as being better versed in the Fathers, and most ancient Writers of the *Primitive Church*, and also come nearer to the Doctrine and Discipline of the present *Catholic Church*, than any other Sect : And tho' these are, by the Faction, stiled *High-Church-Men*, yet, if they would strictly pursue the Doctrines they themselves maintain, I doubt not, but there would quickly be a Coalition between them and the *Gallican Church* ; but, perhaps, not with those of *Spain* and *Italy*, who acknowledge the *personal Infallibility* of his Holiness, when he takes upon him to determine Matters of Faith, or Practice *in Cathedrâ* ; i. e. in his infallible Capacity, as Head, or Vicegerent of the Church of *Christ* upon Earth : And tho' these Mens Eyes are not so thoroughly opened, as to have a clear Prospect of all the necessary Consequences flowing from their Doctrines, and thereby of becoming true *Catholics* ; yet thus much must be said for them, that they join with us in disowning all the pretended Orders, not only of your *Hugonot* Ministers in *France*, but likewise of those in *Holland*, *Swisserland*, and *Geneva*, with the other Provinces of *Germany*, where the *Calvinian* Doctrine and Discipline prevail ; and so of all

all the pretended *Lutheran Churches* in *Germany, Denmark and Sweden*, for Want of Bishops, Priests and Deacons, derived by an uninterrupted Succession from the Apostles, who were the first Bishops appointed by *Christ*; He himself being the chief and great Apostle sent by God his Father. Now, to conclude what I have to say upon this Head, there certainly can be no true Church without a true Clergy; for where no such Clergy are, there can be no true Sacraments; and where no Sacraments are, there can be no Salvation; since they are the outward and visible Signs of God's invisible and spiritual Grace: Therefore it plainly follows, the Premises being true (as I doubt not but you will say they are) that all Ministers deriving their Orders from *Luther*, a simple Monk, or Priest (and much less from those lately in *France*, and who still continue in other Countries of the *Calvinian* Persuasion, who derive their Orders from such as never were so much as ordained Priests) can have no just Pretension to any Holy Orders at all; and consequently all their ministerial Acts, according to the Tenets of our *Catholic Church*, and those also of the more learned Part of your now Church of *England* Clergy, are null and void, as
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if they had been only performed by mere Lay-Mechanics; as is (or was lately) practised among the *Independents* and *Anabaptists* here, who make no Difference between the Clergy and Laity, but only for the Time they take on them to perform their ministerial Functions.

R. I wonder to hear you discourse at this Rate; when (if your modern Fathers, the School-Men, may be believed) they make Bishops and Priests not to be two distinct Orders, but only different Degrees in one and the same Order; there being no Difference between them, as to their *essential* Character derived from *Christ* and his Apostles, but only in their *Jurisdiction*, and the Power of conferring Orders; which they own was from no express Command of *Christ*, but a prudent human Institution of the Apostles, who appointed Bishops in the Church for the avoiding of *Schism*, and Contention for Preheminence among the inferior Clergy. And of this Opinion both St. *Hierom*, and St. *Austin*, seem to be, as I could prove by several Quotations from them, if I would enter into a long Detail, out of Fathers and School-Men: So that, when *Luther*, and some other Priests, had left the Communion of the Church of *Rome*, they joined in
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the Ordination either of *Superintendents*, or Ministers of particular Churches and Parishes, when they could not bring in any of the *Popish* Bishops to join with them ; and herein they did no more than act according to the primitive Institution of the Apostles, who first made Presbyters, and then thought it necessary to ordain Bishops. So much, I think, may serve to prove the Validity of the Orders in the *Lutheran* Churches, even according to your own Principles. I come now to those of the *Calvinian* Persuasion, as you are pleased to call it, who went upon the same Principles ; and I doubt not, but to make it evident, that the first Ordination of Ministers in *France* was performed by some Priests who received their Orders in the Church of *Rome* ; and that even *Calvin* himself was so ordained, before he came to officiate as chief Minister of the Church of *Geneva*. But, supposing the worst ; that he never received a regular Ordination ; yet even this was excuseable, according to the Principles of your Church, which allows the Baptism of Laymen ; nay, of Midwives in *Case of Necessity*, when any Infant, or grown Person, unbaptized, is in Danger of Death : Nor can I see, if Orders were allowed to be a Sacrament
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(as they are not) why they should be more sacred than *Baptism*, the first and great Sacrament of the *Christian* Institution, by which the Party is admitted a Member of *Christ's* Church, and receives Remission of Sins: But I see you *Roman-Catholics* can depart even from your own Doctrines and Practice, when it will advance your Cause; and cast a Bone of Contention between those of the same Communion in the *English* Church.

P. Indeed, you are greatly mistaken, if you imagine I have maintained this out of any such Design; for I was always of the Opinion of the most *primitive* Fathers, that *Bishops*, as Successors to the Apostles, are of *Divine Right*. And tho' I must own, that, in the Council of *Trent*, when the *Spaniards* urged the Superiority of Bishops above Presbyters, in Point of Order, to be of *Divine Right*, that was opposed by the *Italian* Cardinals and Bishops, because it might seem to intrench upon his Holiness's Authority to nominate, or depose them at his Pleasure; yet, notwithstanding all the Opposition which was then made, the *Divine Right* of Episcopacy stands established by a very express Decree of that Council, which I perfectly
well

well remember, viz. ^a If any one shall say, that, *in the Catholic Church, there is not a Hierarchy instituted by a Divine Ordinance, which consists of Bishops, Priests and Deacons, let him be ANATHEMA.* So that whatever Disputes and Niceties the modern School-Men have raised about this Matter, yet the present *Catholic Church* maintains all the three Orders to be of *Divine Institution*; and if so, then no Necessity whatever can justify either *Luther* or *Calvin*, in conferring Orders without Bishops by a Succession from the Apostles; and you *French Hugonots* ought to be of this Opinion, because so long as you had Power, you did not only make void all the Baptisms performed by Midwives, but also by Laymen, upon every such Necessity; and therefore if absolute Necessity will not make valid with you that Baptism, which is not administered by a Church-Officer, ordained by the Imposition of Hands after your Way; pray, why should the Plea of Necessity hold good as to the conferring of Orders by mere Presbyters, which the *Catholic Church* never allowed of; much less then by your first

^a Sef. 23. Can. 6.

Calvinian Preachers, who were never so much as even Priests themselves ?

R. This last I again deny, and therefore it lies upon you to prove it: And as to your Argument, from the Judgment of our *Protestant* Churches, that *Lay-Baptism* in Case of utmost Necessity is void, therefore *Lay-Ordination* ought to be void also ; I deny that there were ever any such in the *French Protestant* Churches. But admit they did, by their Decrees, declare all *Lay-Baptism* null and void ; this was only their Opinion, and never was maintained by the *Lutherans*, who at this Day allow both of Laymens baptizing, and of Midwives also, in Cases of Necessity : And in diverse Churches of the *Calvinian* Model, as the *Helvetic*, and those in the *Palatinate*, it is granted, that Baptism administered by Laymen, in Case of Necessity, ought not to be repeated : And therefore, since I came over hither, and am become a Member of the Church of *England*, I do believe (and I suppose all, or most of her Bishops and Clergy do the same) that Baptism administered by Laymen, in Cases of Necessity, is valid ; and that this was the Doctrine presently after the *Reformation* is very certain, if it be true (as I have been credibly informed here) that, during

all Queen *Elizabeth's* Reign, even Midwives were permitted to baptize Children in Danger of Death ; but, indeed, at the Beginning of King *James's* Reign, when, on Complaint of that Practice by some *Puritan* Divines, at the *Hampton-Court* Conference, it was commanded, by his Majesty, to be no longer continued : The Bishops therefore, ever since, have left off giving their Licenses to Midwives. But, if even the *Protestant* Churches of *France* had not thought such Baptisms, in Cases of Necessity, to be valid, they would never have admitted any into their Church, much less into the Order of Ministers, who had not brought Certificates of their being baptized by a Priest ; for you very well know, that a very considerable Part of the Children born in *France*, are baptized by Midwives ; and if such Persons should not be taken for *Christians*, they ought, when they come over to the *Reformed Religion*, to be christened anew : The like I may say for the present *English* Bishops, who never make any Inquiry, how the Converts from the Church of *Rome* were baptized, whether by Priests or Midwives, tho' they must needs know that a great many of them have had no other Baptism ; and in this they act very consistently :
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For if it should be once admitted, that all Baptisms by Laymen and Women were void, there could be no Certainty of any true uninterrupted Succession either of Bishops or Presbyters. And, if the Rule be true, as to Orders, *Nemo dat quod non habet*, I see no Reason why it should not hold good against all Orders conferred by Persons so baptized; for the Bishop, or Priest, ought to be a *Christian* himself, before he can make others so; which he could not be, if his own Baptism by a Layman, or a Midwife, was *de Facto* void. But, to conclude, if no Orders nor Baptisms are vaild, but such as are conferred by Bishops, and Priests regularly ordained by Bishops; it is evident, that the Church of *England* must stand alone by her self, as the only true *Protestant Reformed* Church, which can lay claim to that Privilege; for the Reasons you have given, and which I know are used by some *English* Divines, who call themselves the only true Churchmen; and therefore, I cannot blame you of the Church of *Rome*, for joyning with them in this Opinion, which cuts off the far greater Part of the *Reformed Protestant* Churches Abroad, from being Members of *Christ's Catholic Church*: And, when once you have done this, you

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will not give those (whose Learning you seem now so much to admire) any better Quarter, but make them *Heretics* all alike; and consequently, their Orders, tho' derived from your own Church, to be as null and void, as those of the *Reformed* Abroad. But tho', for my own Part, I am very well satisfied with the Government of the Church by Bishops, Priests and Deacons, as truly primitive and orthodox, being derived from the Apostles themselves; yet, as to the *Divine Right* of Episcopacy, and its uninterrupted Succession from them in every Age of the World, since neither of these are required by that Profession of *Faith*, called the *Thirty Nine Articles*, I think I may use my *Christian Liberty* in Points of so nice a Nature, without determining positively about them either Way.

But pray, *Sir*, proceed with the rest of your Arguments, Why I ought not to have left the Communion of the present *Gallican* Church, and come hither, and join with that established here in *England*.

P. I shall, *Sir*; and, to shew my self a fair Opponent, will not insist upon the *Pope's Infallibility*, either in, or out of a General Council, whenever lawfully assembled.

assembled for the determining Matters of *Faith*, denied by *Heretics*, and settling the true Sense and Meaning of some doubtful Texts of Scripture, which have been wrested by them to their own Destruction; and will only make Use of the Arguments, and Authority of several of the most learned Divines of your own Church, who have treated on this Subject.

First, therefore, give me Leave to suppose, since Bishops are acknowledged by them to be *Jure Divino*, as the true Successors to the Apostles, that they are indued with all those Powers (except the extraordinary ones of the *Holy Ghost*, in working Miracles, and speaking in unknown Tongues) which they themselves had, *viz. of teaching, and baptizing all Nations, of binding, and loosing*; that is, of remitting Sins by *Absolution*, and retaining them by *Excommunication*, 'till, by such Penalties as they think sufficient, Offenders shew their sincere Repentance by Amendment of their Lives, and make Satisfaction to the Church for the Scandal they had before given her: And, that your Bishops do use this Authority, is seen by the Power they exercise in their Ecclesiastical Courts over scandalous Persons, either by themselves, or their

Substitutes, called *Chancellors*; and likewise, in their Synods, or Convocations, that they impose *what new Ceremonies they think fit*, and determine *all Matters relating to Faith*, appears by their 20th *Article*; wherein it is expressly declared, *That the Church* (not the *Catholic*, but that of *England*) *has Authority to appoint Rites and Ceremonies*, and also in *Matters of Faith*: Nor does it any Way make against our Doctrine, to say, that your Church does not claim to be *infallible*, like that of *Rome*; it is sufficient to my Purpose, if she claims such an absolute supreme Authority, that all in her Communion are bound, under Pain of Damnation, to submit to her Canons, and Decisions; not only to those she has already made, but likewise to what she shall please to order and decree, of the same Nature, *in futuro*; or else that *Article* would have been to no Purpose at all: From which, let me observe by the Way, that all those Powers considered, being claimed by your Bishops, as derived from *Christ*, and his Apostles; it was a very strange Doctrine, lately delivered in a Sermon by one of your *Low-Church* Bishops, that, because *our Saviour's Kingdom is not of this World*, therefore he hath left no *Vicegerents* to govern

vern his Church in his Stead, nor *any Interpreters* of his Laws, and Doctrine declared in the *Sacred Scriptures*; but the bare Words themselves, which are liable to as many different Interpretations, and Fancies, as there are Readers of different Notions, who will take upon them to understand that Text in diverse, nay, quite contrary Senses. Now, to apply what I have said to the present Purpose, *viz.* against any *private Judgments*, contrary to the received Doctrines and Traditions of the present *Catholic Church*: If, I say, your national Church can lay Claim to, and exercise, so large a Power, it must certainly be granted, that the Pope, as Patriarch of the *West*, and Successor to St. *Peter*, to whom *Christ* committed the Keys of his Kingdom, must be indued with a far higher Authority. I might proceed farther on this Subject, but will forbear; only desire you either to agree with me in what I have advanced, or to shew me your Reasons why you cannot.

R. I am not ignorant of your Devices, in making Use of the Arguments, which some *English* Doctors have lately brought against the *Dissenters* (and especially that Bishop, whom they charge with being a Favourer of them) in Hopes thereby, the

more to prove the *infallible* Authority of your Church ; tho' you do not think it convenient at present to let People know it. But, to tell you my Thoughts of what you have now laid down : In the first Place, I do not deny the Power committed by *Christ* to his Apostles, *of teaching and baptizing all Nations*, or that this Power does not descend to their Successors, the Bishops and Presbyters of the Church ; but will own, they have the Power of the Keys committed to them, in like Manner as the Apostles had, tho' surely, *not to the same Extent and Degree* ; for their *Absolutions* and *Excommunications* were always rightly and duly administered, because they had the Gift of *discerning Spirits* ; that is, Mens Thoughts and Inclinations, without any other visible Signs. But, will you therefore say, that all the *Absolutions*, and *Excommunications*, issued even by the Pope himself, are certain and *infallible*, and not often done *Clave errante*, as you term it ? And have not several Kings of *France* appealed from the Pope to a *General Council*, and, being supported by an Assembly of their Clergy, have despised his *Excommunications*, issued forth in temporal Matters, which did not belong to him as the supreme spiritual Pastor ?

And,

And, if he could be thus mistaken, can the Bishops, who (as most of you say) derive their Character from him, be indued with a superior, and more absolute Authority? So likewise, for your sacerdotal *Absolutions*, will you say (if you are a Priest, as I know not but you may be) that you have such absolute Power of the Keys, *that whose Sins soever you remit, they are actually remitted*, whether the Party be truly penitent, or not? Which you can no Way judge of, but by hearing his Confession; and if God should, upon your Absolution, when his is but an outward Attrition, be obliged to pardon the really impenitent Sinner, true Repentance would signify nothing: For at that Rate, a mere Hypocrite would be as capable of *Absolution*, as the most sincere Penitent; and God, by this Means, would be obliged to make no Difference between the one and the other: So likewise, as to the Power committed to Bishops and Priests, of denying *Absolution* to the Impenitent; can you maintain, that, in your Church, this Power is not too often abused, and a Bishop, or Priest, thro' Misinformation, or, perhaps, Prejudice against the Party who desires *Absolution*, does refuse it him, tho' he should be really a Penitent? Or can you, how-

ever, affirm, that if he should happen to die without being absolved, he should be eternally damned? As to *Purgatory*, that will not satisfy: For they who have received your Sacraments of the *Host*, and *Extreme Unction*, with *Absolution* in the most solemn Manner, are still liable to those hellish Torments, 'till they have either thoroughly satisfied for their Sins, by induring the Punishment, or are discharged from it by so many Masses as the Priest shall think fit (he himself first being paid) for that Purpose.

Having done with the Power of the Keys committed to Church-Officers; I come next to that distinguishing Character of a Bishop, viz. *Ordination*; and in this, they are certainly more liable to be mistaken, than in the other: For, whereas the Apostles, being guided by the immediate Direction of the *Holy Ghost*, could not be imposed upon in their conferring Holy Orders; and, therefore, never ordained any but such as were truly fit, and deserved those Functions. I presume, you will not affirm your present Bishops, no, not the Pope himself, to be *infallible*, as to this Matter; but that too many unworthy, as well as unlearned Bishops, and Priests, have been, and still are ordained, and promoted to the highest,

highest, and best Ecclesiastical Dignities and Preferments: And, if it be so in your own Church, I suppose you will allow the Church of *England* Bishops to be much less absolute and infallible in that Point: So that, upon the whole Matter, admitting Bishops and Presbyters are, in some Respects, to be looked on as Successors to the Apostles; yet, they are not indued with the same *infallible* Spirit; not only with Regard to their extraordinary Gifts, but even to those more constant and ordinary Powers, which I own were, in some Degree, to remain with the Bishops, and Pastors of the Church, 'till *Christ's* Coming again to judge the World.

P. I have heard, with Patience, all you have urged upon these Heads, and cannot but say, it is in the General true: For I must own our *Absolutions* to be in some Sense *conditional*, and do not operate (as we say) but *in Subjeeto capaci*; nor will I affirm a true Penitent to be damned, who happens to die without *Absolution*: But then, pray, if you do not allow Bishops and Priests a Power, *properly*, to *remit* and *retain Sins*, to what Purpose was that Authority first given to the Apostles (whose Successors you own your
Bishops

Bishops to be) if you deny their exercising the like Authority?

R. In Answer to this, I think, I may restrain that Authority of *forgiving* and *retaining* Sins, *absolutely* and *infallibly* to *Jesus Christ*, and his Apostles; but deny it to be conveyed in the same Kind, or Degree, to their Successors; their *Abolutions* being able only to operate conditionally, and *in Subiecto capaci* (as you word it) *i. e.* according to the Fitness of the Subject who is to receive it: And, since our Bishops and Pastors are not indued with the like *infallible Gift* of judging concerning the inward Capacity, or Incapacity of real, or only pretending Penitents, they cannot act now as the Apostles did, being *absolute Vicegerents*, and Judges of the Party's Merits, but rather as more inferior Officers, like Heralds, who are often sent to rebellious Subjects, to declare the King's Pardon, to all who, submitting and laying down their Arms, will become good Subjects for the Future; which, whether they do heartily, and *ex Animo*, or not, God only can tell. And that the *Abolution*, prescribed by the Church of *England* in her Liturgy, is only of this conditional Kind, appears plainly by the *Abolution*
given

given after the general Confession of Sins: *He* (viz. God) *pardoneth, and absolveth all them, who truly repent, and unfeignedly believe his Holy Gospel.* So likewise, the Form of *Absolution*, in the Communion-Service, runs thus: “Almighty God, our Heavenly Father, who, of his great Mercy, hath promised Forgiveness of Sins to all them, who, with hearty Repentance, and true Faith, turn unto him, have Mercy upon you, and forgive you all your Sins”, &c.

P. I grant it is so in your Church-Liturgy, where public Confession, by the whole Congregation, is only required; for there a general and conditional *Absolution* can only be given; but a more particular and absolute one is prescribed in your Church, upon Confession of any great and enormous Sin, which troubles the Party's Conscience: For he is, in that Case, commanded to go to some learned, and discreet Minister of God's Word, and open his Grief (*that is his Sin*) that, by the Ministry of God's Holy Word, he may receive the Benefit of *Absolution*, together with ghostly Counsel and Advice, to the quieting his Conscience. But farther, in the Office for *Visitation of the Sick*,

Sick, the Minister is directed to move the Sick Person to a special Confession of his Sins, &c. And after shall absolve him in these Words (and which, let me tell you, are the same with those used on the like Occasion in our Church; for the Priest in both of them makes Use of almost the very same Form) saying, "by his (*viz. Christ's*) Authority committed to me, I absolve thee from all thy Sins, in the Name of the Father, &c." from all which, it is evident, that your Ministers, in both those Cases, do take upon them to absolve *authoritatively*, in *Christ's* Stead; or else these Words, *by his Authority committed to me*, would be wholly in vain, and to no Purpose at all.

R. Well then, I am glad you are satisfied that, in our public *Absolutions*, the Form is only *conditional*, upon a charitable Supposition, that the whole Church, or Congregation, who have made that Confession, are true Penitents: And, if I can prove to you, that, in both those Instances of *private Confession*, and *Absolution*, you have now cited from the *English* Liturgy, they are no Way absolute, but as much *conditional* as the former; I hope there will need no farther Dispute between us as to that Point.

Now,

Now, to do this, I shall make some Observations upon those Forms, which, when duly considered, will plainly prove what I affirm: *First*, therefore, pray take Notice, that, in the Exhortation before the *Communion*, the Words you refer to are no positive Command, but only a friendly and pastoral Advice, and they can intend no other: They are thus (as near as I can remember) “ *therefore, if there be any of you who cannot quiet his own Conscience, but requireth farther Comforts or Counsel, let him come to me, or some other discreet Minister of God’s Word, &c.* ” So that you may here see, this is no positive Command for the indispensable Use of *Auricular Confession*, as it is prescribed, in your Church, to all who are to communicate, under Pain of mortal Sin; and being refused the *Host*, if the Priest knows that the Party would receive it without such *Confession*: Whereas in ours it is but advised, and that only in a particular Case, *viz. when the Party cannot otherwise quiet his own Conscience*; and then, tho’ I grant, he is advised to open his Grief to some discreet Minister; yet, it is left to his Choice to whom he will do it, without being obliged to take the Priest, or Minister, of his own Parish, or of
any

any other Church, for his Confessor in this Case. But as for the *Absolution*, which is to follow after this *Confession*; because there is no express Form prescribed for it, therefore, I suppose, it is left to the Minister's Discretion what Form of *Absolution* he will make Use of in that Case; whether that after the public Confession, and Morning and Evening Service, or that I before mentioned in the Communion: And, as to that Form in the *Visitation of the Sick*, it is prescribed to be used only to such as are in imminent Danger of Death, and to no others, as I can find: But, to speak to the last Form (which, I own, comes nearest to that of your *Romish Church*) it appears, from the very Direction before this *Absolution*, that it is only *conditional*: For, first, the *Rubric* does not positively injoin, or so much as prescribe, the Sick Person to make any Confession at all; *but only he shall be moved to make a special Confession of his Sins, if he feel his Conscience troubled about any weighty Matter*; after which Confession so made, the Priest shall absolve him, *and that only, if he heartily desires it*. Now here, pray observe, that, as this special Confession is left to the Discretion of the Sick Person, *if he feel his Conscience troubled, &c.* So like-

likewise, this *Absolution* need not be given, *unless he himself heartily desire it*: And yet, no true *Protestant*, I believe, will say, that, if the *Absolution* be not read to him, the Person dies impenitent, and is consequently liable to eternal Damnation. Pray, consider also the Form of this *Absolution*, which begins thus: *Our Lord JESUS CHRIST, who hath left Power to his Church to absolve all Sinners who truly repent, and believe in him, of his great Mercy forgive thee thine Offenses, &c.* From which Words, it is manifest, that the *Absolution* can be only understood conditionally, *viz.* if the Person be indued with *true Faith and Repentance*; and on that Supposition *Christ* is invoked of his great Mercy to forgive him; and therefore, when the Priest concludes this *Absolution* with those Words you chiefly insist upon, *I absolve thee from all thy Sins*, it must still be understood with Respect to the immediately preceding Conditions of *true Faith and Repentance*; with which Graces the Sick Person is then supposed to be indued: But, to conclude; since you yourself have already granted, that your *Absolution*, in all other Cases, can only operate *in Subjeto capaci*; will you make the *Absolution*, given to a dying Sinner, to have

a greater Efficacy, than that to any other Offender? If so, I do not know a greater Motive to make Men defer Repentance 'till the last Moment of their Lives; since then, upon an *Attrition* of a few Hours, nay perhaps Minutes, after this last Confession on their Death-Bed, and the *Absolution* pronounced by the Priest thereupon, all their Sins shall be immediately forgiven; tho' possibly the Party has lived a most notorious Sinner, and may die a mere Hypocrite, for ought the Priest can tell. In fine, as I do not deny, but the Priest, in giving this *Absolution*, does it in some Sense by *Authority* from *Christ*, which no Layman can take upon him to pronounce; yet, that he does not act here by any *absolute infallible Power*, and to the same Degree as the Apostles could have done in a like Case, is very plain; because, whenever they gave Remission of Sins to any Person, they were sure it would have its full Effect, without any Condition; for they could judge of the Sincerity of those Penitents to whom they gave it, which you will not say any of your Bishops and Priests can now do.

P. I shall not insist any farther about *Confession* and *Absolution*, as it is used in the Church of *England*, or how much they

they fall short of ours; these being Points I reserve 'till I have Occasion to speak again concerning them: But will go to the next Head I propos'd, and shew you your Mistake, by making Use of your own *private Judgment*, in leaving the Communion of the *Catholic Church of France*, and coming over to this pretended one here in *England*: And tho' she, indeed, admits of Mens using their *private Judgments*, in preferring her Opinions and Doctrines before those of our Church; yet, if you have once joined your self to her Communion (as you own you now have done) you will find, that she requires as absolute a Submission of your *private Judgment* to her Articles and Canons (under Pain of Damnation) as the Church of *Rome* her self can do: And this is plain, from her declaring all Sorts of *Dissenters* from her Communion to be either *Heretics*, or *Schismatics*, and that as such they cannot be saved; and this Doctrine, I observe, has been the common Theme of most printed Sermons and Pamphlets which have been written of late; particularly against the *Presbyterians*, ever since the Restoration of the Hierarchy on King *Charles II*'s Return into *England*: So that, whoever will but impartially consider the Difference

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between Her and our Church, will find, that this openly assumes *Infallibility* in all her Decrees and Canons ; and, on that Account, requires an absolute, indisputable Submission and Obedience : Whereas the other, tho' she does not directly pretend to any such *Infallibility*, but seems to declare the contrary ; yet, in her Practice, nay, in that very Article I but now cited, concerning the Authority she challenges, *in appointing Ceremonies, and determining Matters of Faith*, she, indeed, takes back again with one Hand, what she seemed to have given away with the other.

And, to make this plainer to you by Instances, I shall first begin with her Ceremonies ; which tho' allowed in themselves only to be indifferent, yet being once enjoined, whoever he be, Minister or Layman, who shall withdraw from her Communion upon that Consideration, immediately he or they become guilty of *Schism*, and consequently of mortal Sin ; let them allege their Conscience, or *private Judgment*, ever so much to the contrary : And, whatever your pretended Church may decree for their Observation, as Things indifferent, yet they are not so indeed ; having been borrowed from the Church of *Rome*,
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and so, added by your Church to the pure Worship of God, ought not to have been retained in any public or common Form of Divine Service, and Administration of the Sacraments, for this Reason ; because it is neither in the Power of the Church-Officers, nor yet of the Civil Magistrates, to add any such Rites or Ceremonies to *Divine Worship*. Now, how you, who was lately a *French Hugonot*, can digest these Impositions, I know not ; but I am sure, according to your *Assembly's* Principles, before they were forbid by the King's Edicts, such Ceremonies and Habits were looked on as *Popish*, and, as such, ought not to have been imposed ; and therefore, seeing you was resolved to return again to your former *Hugonotism*, I wonder you did not rather join your self to a *French Congregation*, either in *London*, or some other City, where the Common-Prayer, and those Ceremonies are not practised ; for surely this had been much more suitable to your own *private Judgment*, since, as a *Hugonot*, you can no Way approve of them : And this is the true Reason, why those *Walloon* and *French Churches*, by their ancient Charters of Exemption from King *Edward VI*, and Queen *Elizabeth*, do still continue in a direct

Schism from that Discipline, and Form of Worship, prescribed by the Church of *England*, in her Liturgy and Canons, confirmed by Act of Parliament. I come now to the latter Part of the 20th *Article*, viz. that concerning Matters of Faith.

R. Let me first, I beseech you, take my Turn, and answer to this Point, before you go any farther. To begin: *First* then, I own what you have cited out of that Article to be as you say, and believe any unprejudiced Person may agree to the first Part of it; without supposing, that the Church of *England* requires an absolute, and implicit Obedience to all the Canons she has made, or may judge fit to make hereafter: But pray observe, tho' she does require Obedience to these Ceremonies and Habits, being Matters indifferent in themselves; yet, since they conduce to Edification, in the more decent and orderly Service of God, they think they may, for Uniformity's Sake, be lawfully enjoined; notwithstanding they are not reckoned as essential Parts of that Worship.

Again, She requires the Observation of them only from those who, by the Civil Laws of the Country, are accounted as natural *English* Subjects; who consequently

sequently ought to submit to her Orders, in Matters indifferent in their own Nature, which either might have been used, or omitted before they were enjoined ; and I cannot see how they should become unlawful, because enjoined by an Ecclesiastical Law or Canon, as the commanding one uniform Posture to all who should receive the Sacrament. These Things I was very well assured of, before I came hither ; and I would not have you think, that any considering *French Protestants* are so over-run with *Hugonotism* (as you call it) as to scruple submitting to the Doctrine and Discipline of the *English Church* : And tho', perhaps, there might be no Necessity, at the *Reformation*, for retaining those Ceremonies, beside the Hopes of thereby bringing over the most moderate, and least superstitious Part of the *Papists*, who were very numerous in those Days ; yet, since the Church still thinks fit to retain them without any Alteration, I my self, and most of my Compatriots, have thought it no Sin ; but rather a Mark of a hearty Submission to the lawful Authority, both Ecclesiastical and Civil, to comply with them, so long as we suppose the Bishops will not abuse that Power, by introducing the old exploded

Ceremonies, which the first *Reformers* then judged to be needless, burdensome, or superstitious: Such, for Example, as *exorcising* the Devil out of the Water appointed for Baptism, by the Charms and Sufflations of the Priest; and particularly, using his *Spittle* with *Salt*, in crossing the Child to be christened; as if the Devil was afraid of that Spittle, and so would immediately fly out of the Infant. But, as for the Posture of Kneeling at the Sacrament of the Lord's-Supper, and the Sign of the Cross in Baptism; so long as the one is owned to be most decent and devout in all religious Duties, and declared not to be intended to the Elements themselves, but only to God; and likewise, that the Cross is made no necessary Part of that Sacrament; I am not in the least scandalized at the Use of it, any more than at the Rest of those few Ceremonies the Church of *England* has prescribed in her Canons and *Rubrics*, in the Book of Common-Prayer.

P. I suppose you have done with this Part of that Article concerning Ceremonies; therefore, before I proceed to the other, pray suffer me to ask you a few Questions. *First*, if you think these Ceremonies decent, and lawful to be submitted

mitted to, by Reason of the Authority which enjoined them; how comes it to pass, that the old *French* Churches in *London*, and other Towns, do not make Use of the *English* Liturgy, &c. as well as those which have come hither since; who, having received the Book of *Common-Prayer* in *French*, may be reckoned as Members of that Church? *Secondly*, If you are willing to submit to these Ceremonies already enjoined, but would not yield Obedience to those others you mention, should they hereafter be prescribed by the same Authority, but would oppose your *private Judgment* in Contradiction to them; why then, may not the *Dissenters* here in *England* make the same Plea for their *Non-Conformity* to the Articles and Canons of your Church; since they think them altogether as needless, and superstitious, as those you have declared to be so? And, why should not their *private Judgment* be admitted for a good Plea, that they cannot in Conscience submit to them, as you think your own would be to any which should be enjoined hereafter? For this *Dilemma* will certainly bear hard upon you; either you submit to these Ceremonies, because of the Authority which enjoins them, or you do not; if the former, then you ought

to yield the like Obedience to all Ceremonies whatever enjoined by the same Authority; since the Article asserts the Church's Authority indefinitely to decree all Rites and Ceremonies whatsoever, without any Restraint or Exception: But, if you think the Church has no such absolute Authority, why then did you submit to them at all; since you say, there was no real Occasion or Necessity for them at the first *Reformation*, beside the Intention of the Injoyners to bring over the *Papists* to the then established Church?

R. The first of your *Queries* I can readily answer; but the second, I confess, is a Matter of greater Nicety: To begin with your first, therefore, I own the Matter of Fact to be true, that those, whom you call the old *French* Churches, have not received the *English* Liturgy; and consequently cannot make Use of those Ceremonies therein enjoined: But then, pray let me set you right in a common Mistake about them, *viz.* that they never consisted of *French* Men, properly so called; that is, of Subjects to *France*, but to *Spain*, being such *Walloons*, or *Flemmings*, as commonly spake the *French* Tongue, as they do to this Day; and these coming over in the Reign of
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Edward VI, and *Queen Elizabeth* (to avoid the severe Persecution the Duke of *Alva* raised against them) were permitted, by the Royal Charters of those Princes, to enjoy the public Exercise of the *Protestant* Religion, according to the Form then received in their own Countries; which Privilege being granted to them, their Heirs, and Successors (tho' they are now almost all natural-born *English*) they still keep up in their respective Congregations: But, they do this not out of any Dislike to the *English* Liturgy, as I have heard many of their Ministers declare, but to maintain their ancient Right; and, in this Respect, they are no more to be blamed than the *Papists*, who had their several Forms of saying Mass in the Church of *England*, before the *Gregorian* Missal was established here, by the Pope of that Name, to be the general Form of their Church-Service, 'till the Time of the *Reformation*.

Of your second *Query*, indeed, I will not be so positive in the Resolution; being but yet a Stranger to the *English* Canon Laws, and Customs: Yet, I will venture to say thus much, and maintain it, that this Article, concerning the Power of the Church to decree Rites and Ceremonies, was never designed to
give

give her (*viz.* the two Houses of Convocation) *an absolute, and unlimited Power to introduce whatever Ceremonies she pleased*: And, in the *New Testament*, there is nothing prescribed, concerning outward Circumstances in God's public Worship, more than *St. Paul's Direction: Let all Things be done decently, and in Order.* But, in what particular Rites that Decency and Order were to consist, and who were to be the proper Judges of it, he has not any where told us. Now, if the Orders and Practice of the Bishops, and Clergy, could have made what Ceremonies they pleased to be decent and orderly, they certainly ought not to have been omitted in the *Reformed Rubric*, directing what Rites and Ceremonies were to be used at the Administration of Baptism; and therefore, if they were left out, because they were supposed by our first *Reformers* to be indecent, unnecessary, and superstitious; they ought never to be again introduced for the same Reasons; and this will always hold true: And, who can be the most proper Judges of this Decency, but the Body of the People, or Laity? For, is it not against common Sense and Reason, that *Salt*, and the *Spittle* of the Priest (joined with crossing, and some superstitious Prayers) should

should be necessary to drive away the Devil, either out of the baptismal Water, or the Child's Body; in neither of which can there be any Proof that he at all resides? The like I may say of another Abuse of Baptism, in using it to *christen Bells*, and to appoint them God-fathers at that Solemnity; and then to believe that the Bells, so baptized and consecrated, are indued with the miraculous Power of driving away Devils, stilling Thunder, and taking away the destructive Force of Lightning.

But, as to your Objection, that, if Laymens *private Judgments* may take Place, and they have a Right to judge of what is decent and lawful, then the *Nonconformists*, or *Dissenters*, will have the same Plea to refuse those very Ceremonies which I allow may be lawfully practised, without any Danger of Superstition; because, in their *private Judgments*, they may think them not only indecent, but unlawful to be imposed. Now in this you are mistaken; for they do not account all the Rites and Ceremonies, ordained by the Church, to be in themselves disorderly and indecent; but, because they will not allow Church-Officers Authority to prescribe, or add any Rite or Ceremony, as a Part of *Divine Worship*,

ship, but what God has himself enjoined: But, suppose they should be mistaken in this Assertion, can their Error, or false arguing, be a good Plea to prove, that the Church has no Authority at all to appoint such Ceremonies, which (the *Dissenters* are forced to acknowledge) were not in themselves unlawful 'till they were enjoined? As for Instance, that Ceremony of Kneeling at the Sacrament of the *Lord's-Supper*? For it does by no Means follow (with Respect to the Ecclesiastical or Civil Powers) that, because they have not an *absolute Authority* to command all Things which their own Humors or Fancies shall suggest to them, without any Respect to the Canonical Scriptures, or the Public-Good, or Edification, either of the Church or Common-wealth; therefore, they cannot command, or injoin any Thing, but what all their Subjects are perfectly satisfied in their Tendency to those Ends: For there may be diverse Causes for the injoining some Things, which, tho' indifferent in their own Nature, those who are ordered to obey them may not immediately be led into the Reasons why they were so enjoined: Now, in such doubtful Cases, I am satisfied, it is the Subjects Duty to submit their *private Judgments* to that of the Public.

P. But

P. But what if the Subjects (*viz.* the *Dissenters*) do judge those Ceremonies utterly unlawful to be complied with; shall that *false Judgment* of theirs excuse them, in Point of Conscience, from obeying the Laws which are enjoined? If so, then farewell any Obedience, even to the Civil Laws of the Common-wealth; for, if this Principle of Mens *private Judgments*, or Consciences (being the Rule of their Actions) shall excuse them before God and Man from Obedience to any Law, which they shall judge unlawful, there is an End of all Civil Government. And, for an Instance of this, I need go no farther than that now numerous Sect, called *Quakers*; who, supposing all War to be unlawful, refuse to serve as Soldiers, in Defense of the Civil Government, either against foreign Enemies, or domestic Rebels: Which Opinion, should it prevail among the common People, by the farther spreading of that pernicious Sect, would leave the Common-wealth without any Means of defending it self from imminent Ruin and Dissolution: And, I think, the same Inconveniencies would follow, should *private Judgment* prevail in Ecclesiastical Cases, directly contrary to the Articles or Canons, legally decreed by any national

tional Church; and, that your Church
 of *England* is of this Judgment, plainly
 appears by the 6th *Canon*, made in
 Convocation, *Anno Dom.* 1603. wherein
 it is declared to this Effect: " That
 " whosoever shall hereafter affirm, that
 " the Rites and Ceremonies of the Church
 " of *England*, by Law established, are
 " wicked, antichristian, or superstitious,
 " or such as, being commanded by law-
 " ful Authority, Men who are godly
 " affected may not with a good Consci-
 " ence approve the Use of them; and,
 " when Occasion requireth, subscribe
 " unto them; let him be excommuni-
 " cated *ipso Facto*, and not be restored
 " until he repenteth, &c." And, by the
 9th *Canon*, " Whosoever shall hereaf-
 " ter separate themselves from the Com-
 " munion of the Church of *England*,
 " and combine themselves into a new
 " Brotherhood, accounting them no
 " Christians who are conformable to the
 " Doctrine, Government, and Ceremo-
 " nies of the Church of *England*, and
 " to be profane, and unmeet for them
 " to join with in Christian Profession;
 " let them be excommunicated *ipso Facto*,
 " and not be restored but by the Arch-
 " Bishop as before": And the same Cen-
 " sures and Punishments are appointed by
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the 10th and 11th Articles, *against Maintainers of Schismatics, and Conventicles* (*viz.* of all such as refused to subscribe to the Manner of God's Worship in the Church of *England*, prescribed by the Communion-Book, and their Adherents) And again, " Those who shall affirm, " that there are other Meetings, and Assemblies of the King's Subjects, than " such as by the Laws of this Land are " held, and allowed, which may rightly " challenge to themselves the Name of " true and lawful Churches; let them " be excommunicated, &c. as before."

I have been the more particular in the Recital of these Canons, because, perhaps, you being a Stranger, and so lately come over hither, may not be acquainted with the Purport of them; which certainly forbid all *private Judgments* to the contrary, as much as the Pope, and the Council of *Trent*, can any Way challenge or exercise. All the Difference I can observe between them is, that our Church exercises this Authority upon the Account of her *Infallibility*, and yours upon that of her *Certainty*, that she is not mistaken.

Now, to conclude this Point; either your Church had a true and unquestionable Power to make these Canons, or she

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had

had not ; if the latter, they are wholly void, and cannot oblige Mens Consciences ; but if the former, all who shall presume to contradict or transgress them, either by speaking or acting, are liable to be excommunicated *ipso Facto* ; and, being thereby out of the Church of *Christ* ; are in a State of eternal Damnation : For most of your Divines hold, that whatever Sentence your Bishops, or their Deputies, give upon Earth, is immediately ratified in Heaven : Therefore, if you left our Church upon your own *private Judgment*, you have made but a bad Change ; since you have joined your self in Communion with one which requires as absolute a Submission of your Judgment to hers, as the Church of *Rome* herself can require.

R. I do not deny the Authority of the Church of *England*, any more than of any other national Church, to draw up her own *Confession of Faith*, and to appoint what Rites or Ceremonies shall be used in the public Worship of God ; and, so long as I can perceive nothing in them which shocks my Reason, in Point of Decency, nor is against any Command of *Christ* in the Gospel, I do not see, why I may not safely yield all due Submission thereunto : Yet, that this Church must there-

therefore assume to her self an *absolute* and *unlimited* Authority, in the appointing those Ceremonies, and to multiply them *in infinitum*, I have not found any sufficient Argument to believe; since she only claims a Power to *decree some Ceremonies*, without extending it to all, indefinitely; for if she should do so, she would exercise a greater Power in *Ceremonies*, than she claims in determining Matters of *Faith*; as I shall prove, when I come to answer what you have to say in Respect to that Part of this *Twentieth Article*. Therefore, if the Church of *England* has Power to make Rules, or Canons, which shall oblige all who are in her Communion, then there must be likewise a Necessity, that those Canons be established by some certain Sanction, or Penalty, on such as should prove obstinate, or disobedient to them. Now, since the Church has no Power to inflict corporal Punishments, or to impose pecuniary Mulcts, or Fines, for such Disobedience, she can only make Use of that Authority, or Power of the Keys, which I own all rightly constituted Churches have received from *Christ*; and that is *Excommunication*, or Exclusion from her Communion, and from all spiritual Privileges which depend thereon; such as

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receiving the Sacrament, &c. But then, I cannot agree to what some Divines so confidently assert, that whoever is thus *excommunicated*, is immediately in a State of *Damnation*; for that would not only make the Bishops, but their very Lay-Chancellors, *infallible*: And thus a Man, who is, perhaps, *excommunicated* in the Ecclesiastical Court for a Tithe-Pig, or some smaller Matter, which the Parish-Minister may claim as his Due (tho' it may not be so truly) I say, a Man so unjustly *excommunicated*, would be as much liable to *Damnation*, as if he had denied any Article of the Creed. And, it is very possible, a Man may have laid to his Charge a Bastard which he never got, and therefore, insisting upon his Innocency, may refuse either to do Penance, or pay Commutation-Money for it, tho' imposed by Sentence of the Ecclesiastical Court; neither of which his Conscience giving him Leave to do, he shall be *excommunicated*: Now, this being certainly done *Clave errante* (as you say) can you, or any one else believe, that this erroneous Sentence is *immediately ratified in Heaven*, so as to make the Party liable to *eternal Damnation*, if he die unabsolved of an Offense of which he was never guilty?

Beside, as to the *Absolution* granted in that Court, after an *Excommunication*, in ever so just a Cause, the Minister, who pronounces that *Absolution*, can only judge of the Sincerity of the Party's Repentance by his outward Submission to, and Performance of what the Court has decreed ; and yet, he might do this not out of any Sense of his Crime, or any true Penitence for it, but merely for Fear of the Writ, *de Excommunicato capiendo*, being taken out against him, in case he continues obstinate, and does not reconcile himself to the Church, by a due Submission to her Sentence, within forty Days after it has been published against him : And, tho' this hypocritical Penitent's *Absolution* shall stand good in *Foro Ecclesiastico*, yet, I suppose, you will not say it has the same Effect with God, in *Foro Cæli*. Thus it is evident that, tho' our Church, in some Cases, may exercise such *absolute* Authority as admits not of any Appeal from it, yet, she is far from laying any Claim to *Infallibility*, in the Use of the Ecclesiastical Keys, either of excluding Men from, or re-admitting them into the Church ; since her Judges can only proceed *secundum allegata et probata* in the one, and only according to the outward Declaration of the Party in

the other : And therefore, our Bishops, and their Deputies, do not lay Claim to the same Degree of Authority, in such Ecclesiastical Matters, as the *Apostles* themselves did exercise ; since none but they could ever challenge the same *infallible* Spirit, by which they were directed, not only to exclude impenitent Sinners out of the Church, but also to deliver them over to *Satan*, for the *Destruction of the Flesh*^b, yet for the *saving of the Spirit*, as *St. Paul* exercised towards the incestuous *Corinthians*.

Having spoken, I think, sufficiently of the Nature and Extent of *Excommunication* and *Absolution*, as it is now commonly practised in the Church of *England* ; I shall, in the next Place, give you my Thoughts on the Points you so much insist upon, as evident Proofs of this Church's condemning all *private Judgments*, which set themselves up in Opposition to her Articles and Canons ; viz. those you have now cited against that great, and numerous Body, the *Nonconformists* and *Dissenters*. But, before I speak particularly to them, I must put you in Mind, that I am not so much a Stranger to those Canons as you imagine ;

^b 1 Cor. v. 5.

for I find, you *Roman Catholics* are as much, if not more, condemned for your *private Judgments*, in Opposition to the Articles and Canons of the Church, than any other Sort of *Dissenters* whatsoever: And, for the Proof of this, I refer you to the LXVth of those very Canons you have cited; the Title of which runs thus, *Ministers are to denounce Recusants, and Excommunicants*. The Canon itself being somewhat long, I shall only give you the Substance of it, whereby, “ All “ *Ordinaries* (that is, Bishops) are re- “ quired to see, and give Order, that as “ well those, who, for obstinate refusing “ to frequent Divine Service, established “ by public Authority, &c. but also those “ (especially of the better Sort and Con- “ dition) who, for notorious Contumacy, “ &c. stand lawfully *excommunicate* (un- “ less, within three Months after the Sen- “ tence is pronounced against them, they “ resolve themselves, and obtain *Absolu- “ tion*) they shall, every six Months in- “ suing, as well in the Parish-Church, “ as in the Cathedral of the Diocese, be “ declared *excommunicate* by the Mini- “ ster, in the Time of Divine Service; “ that others may avoid their Company “ and Society, and be excited to procure “ the Writ, *de Excommunicato capiendq*,

“ against them, thereby to bring them
 “ to due Order and Obedience :” And
 that this Canon was made particularly for
Popish Recusants, appears by the very
 next Canon, which appoints, “ That
 “ every Minister, having *Popish Recu-*
sants in his Parish, shall labor dili-
 “ gently to reclaim them from their
 “ Errors, &c.” So that the *Roman Catho-*
lics are, by this Canon, when *excommuni-*
cated, put into a like State of Misery, af-
 ter this Life, with any other Sort of
Dissenters whatsoever.

P. I am not satisfied, from what you have
 said, that the *Roman Catholics* in *England*
 (tho’ liable, by this Canon, to what they
 call *Excommunication*) ought to be at all
 concerned at it ; since your Church, be-
 ing only a *heretical Assembly*, has no
 Authority to excommunicate *True Catho-*
lics : And, as for *private Judgment*, they
 disclaim it ; for they resolve their Belief
 into *implicit Faith* in that Church
 which alone can lay Claim to *Infalli-*
bility.

R. Well, *Sir*, be it so : But then pray
 see what will be the Consequence of this
 Doctrine ; and whether you have not
 furnished the *Nonconformists* with as
 good Arguments against the Validity
 of those *Excommunications*, to which
 they

they are liable by these Canons. For, as the *Roman Catholics* deny the Validity of our Church's *Excommunications*, as being a *heretical Assembly*; so the *Nonconformists* (tho' they do not carry it so high as you do, yet) deny their Validity upon much the like Grounds, *viz.* "That Diocesan Bishops, not being an Office appointed by God's Word, their *Excommunications*, when issued out against truly *Orthodox* Christians, who make that Word the only Rule of their Faith, is of no Effect against them." Nor will it at all help the *Roman Catholics* to plead in their own Defense, that they disclaim *private Judgment* in Matters of Faith; because they resolve their Belief into *implicit Faith* in that Church which alone can lay Claim to *Infallibility*: For I think it is evident, that every *Roman Catholic*, who holds this Opinion, follows his own *private Judgment*, in believing that Church alone to be *infallible*; for, if he will say he believes it, because his Priest, or Confessor, tells him he ought to do so, does he not in that follow his own *private Judgment*, in preferring the Priest's Judgment before his own, or that of the Minister of the Parish where he lives, who tells him he ought not so to do? But, if you will say,

he ought to be of the *Catholic* Religion, because it is the most ancient, and that his Parents taught it him ; will not this Argument hold good as to all other Religions, imbraced only upon that Account, as well as the *Roman Catholic* ? The *Jews* make this their chief Argument for retaining *Judaism* : But, if you will grant any Man a Liberty to inquire into the Grounds and Reasons, why he should prefer the Religion in which he has been educated, before any other which may be proposed to him, must not his own *private Judgment* alone determine him so to do ? Unless you will say he ought to be of the Religion which was first taught him, without any Examination whether it be right or wrong ; which I am sure you will not maintain. So that, if to differ from the national Church, established by Laws both Ecclesiastical and Civil, be to follow ones *private Judgment*, then every *Roman Catholic* in *England*, who so differs from it, goes by his own *private Judgment*, as much as any *Nonconformist*, or *Dissenter*, whatsoever ; and therefore, you ought not to blame them for making Use of that Liberty practised by all our *English Roman Catholics*.

P. This Controversy no Way concerns me, who am no Subject of *England* ;

land; nor yet the *Roman Catholics*, who have never acknowledged the Religion professed, or Government as now settled here: But yet, it seems to me, the *Non-conformists* cannot make this Plea; for they are not only Subjects to the Civil Government, which they own by taking all the Oaths to it by Law required; but they are likewise (as *Protestants*) implicitly obliged to obey that Church-Government, and those Ceremonies their Bishops have appointed; and ought not to reject them, as not being contrary to the Word of God. And, as for their *Schism*, or open Separation from the Church established, some knowing Men of that Communion have informed me, that there was no such Thing at first, after the *Reformation*, as private Conventicles of the *Puritans*, during most Part of Queen *Elizabeth's*, or King *James I's* Reigns, or in King *Charles's*, 'till the long Parliament openly declared for *Presbytery*: But, during all those Times, the most sober and moderate Part of the *Presbyterians* (who then went under the Name of *Puritans*) tho' they did not much approve of either Episcopal Government, or the Ceremonies prescribed by the *Rubric* and *Canons*; yet, they did not judge themselves bound on those
Accounts,

Accounts, to separate from that established Church, but at first submitted to, and subscribed the *Canons* which the Laws then required: So that only the more turbulent, factious Class of *Dissenters*, called *Brownists*, held such Meetings; and these, being persecuted at Home, at last took Refuge in *New-England*, and set up Congregations of the like rigid Sort with themselves, which continue there to this Day: These People held several Opinions different from the rest, *viz.* the perpetual Obligation of the IVth *Commandment*, concerning the Sabbath, almost in the same Manner as the *Jews* observe it; as also divers other *heterodox* Opinions, which several of the *Puritan* Ministers then wrote against: Therefore, however they might agree together in some Points, yet, because they made no Separation from the established Church, they were still looked upon as Members thereof, and, as such, were obliged to submit to receive her Articles and Canons; but, in refusing so to do, they were justly liable to all those Canons made against such *schismatical* Teachers, and their Followers.

Now surely, the Case of the *Roman Catholics* was much more justifiable; for they did no more than maintain the same Religion,

Religion, which had been believed and practised, in *England*, for almost a thousand Years before the *Reformation*; and which had been likewise established by all those Sanctions, which either the Ecclesiastical Canons, or Acts of Parliament, had prescribed: And, upon that Account, not thinking it lawful to forsake their old Religion, they did then refuse, and do to this Day, holding Communion (as to the public Worship of God) with any Assemblies, which they look upon as *heretical* and unlawful. In fine, the *Roman Catholics* have always maintained their Orthodoxy without varying, which the *Presbyterians* have not done; but, by their Submission to the then established Church, they rendered themselves, their Successors and Descendants, perpetual Members of it, and consequently, to all her Articles and Canons which injoin Episcopacy, with all those Rites and Ceremonies against which they have now expressly declared, by an *open Schism* from that Church.

R. I doubt whether the Persons, who undertook to inform you of the State of Church-Affairs, immediately after the *Reformation*, did so well perform it as they might have done: For then they ought to have told you, that most of the
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Roman Catholics, during all the Reign of *Edward VI*, and for the first twelve Years of that of *Queen Elizabeth*, joined in the outward Communion of the Church of *England*, by frequenting her Churches, and agreeing in all the Parts of public Worship, without making any *open Schism*, or *Separation* from it; 'till Pope *Pius V*, fearing they might wholly come over to that Church, and desert his own, strictly forbid their going any longer to the public Service, under Pain of *Damnation*: So that, if outward Compliance, and Submission to the Canons and Liturgy of the Church, could make Persons become true Members of it, the *Roman Catholics*, after the *Reformation*, should thereby have become as true Subjects to it, as you suppose the *Puritans* then did by their Submission, and Obedience to those Canons, without making any open *Separation*: And therefore, the *Roman Catholics* of that Time were, in that Respect, as much *Occasional-Conformists*, as many of the *Presbyterians* are at this Day.

But, to give you some better Information, than what I perceive you have hitherto received, concerning the outward Compliance of the old *Puritans* with Episcopacy, and the Rites and Ceremonies

nies then established by the *Rubric* and *Canons* ; I shall briefly relate what I have heard from Persons of good Credit, who are of the Church of *England*, concerning the Beginning, Progress, and Increase of the *Puritans*, now called *Presbyterians* ; and this, not for any Inclination I have to them, but thro' pure Regard to Truth. First then, I have been informed that, in *Edward VI's* Reign, the Controversy first began about *Habits* ; several Clergymen, and one particularly, who was to be ordained a Bishop^c, refused to comply with the Use of those then prescribed to be worn by Bishops and Priests : And, tho' that Difference was at the present made up by a forced Compliance with them ; yet, upon the Death of that King, and his Sister *Mary's* Succession to the Crown, a great Number of *Protestants*, as well Laymen, as Clergy, were forced to flee beyond Sea for the Preservation of their Lives ; except they would wholly come over to the *Romish* Church. Now several of these fixed their Residence at *Francfort*, and there complied with that Form of public Service, then exercised in the *French*

^c Mr. Hooper. See Foxe's Acts and Monuments, and Bishop Burnet's History of the Reformation.

Churches, 'till one Dr. Cox, and others, coming from *England*, and making a stronger Party there, introduced the *English* Liturgy; which raised such a terrible Division among them (one Party declaring for, and the other against it) that at last those who were of this Opinion, finding the Magistrates of that City to favor the former, thought it most convenient to quit their Communion, and retire to *Geneva*, and other Places, where they were farther confirmed in their Aversion to those Habits and Ceremonies, prescribed by that Book. And, upon Queen *Elizabeth's* Succession to the Crown, when they returned into *England*, they brought over a greater Aversion to them, than they had when they went: And this *Schism*, thus commenced at *Francfort*, was indeed the Beginning of that Sort of Profession, which then went under the Name of *Puritanism*; tho' not at all different, as to the *Essentials* of Religion, from the other, but merely about Habits, and outward Forms of Divine Worship. But however, for the first four or five Years of that Queen's Reign, there were no open Differences, nor any Separations about these Matters; because the Common-Prayer-Book, in King *Edward VI's* Reign, revised and altered in several Particulars,

ticulars, was established anew, and commanded to be used by an Act of her first Parliament; by which Kneeling at the Sacrament was again enjoined, as also the Cross in Baptism. However, because there was then a great Want of *Protestant* Preachers and Divines, the Government thought fit to make Use of several of them; and some, being Men of considerable Parts and Learning, were advanced to be Professors, and Heads of Houses in both the Universities; and others to be Deans, and Prebendaries in Cathedral Churches: And yet, they refused Livings with Cure of Souls; because they scrupled the Use of the Surplice, and other Ceremonies; so that, it was no great Matter of Wonder, if the young Men, bred up in those Colleges where they presided, were prepossessed with the same Prejudices. But, during all this Time, for depraving, or vilifying the Book of Common-Prayer, no less than Forfeiture of the Criminals Goods and Chattels, and Imprisonment for Life, was the Punishment, appointed by *Act of Parliament*^d, for the third Offense of that Kind; yet, I do not find that any one ever suffered on that Account: And, 'till the passing

^d 1 *Eliz.* chap.

of the XXXIX Articles, in the Year 1562^c, there was nothing ordered or decreed, by Convocation, concerning the Church's *Authority to appoint Rites and Ceremonies*; for there is no such Article to be found among those passed there in *Edward VI's* Reign; only in general, that such as refused lawful Ceremonies, not contrary to the Word of God, should be openly reprov'd. Therefore, perhaps, it would have been better liked by the Majority of the People, if that Part of the Article, concerning Ceremonies, had been wholly omitted, or more cautiously worded, than it now stands; or at least, by some subsequent Canon, it had been left to Mens Consciences, either to use, or forbear them, as they should think fit. But that some, even of the then Bishops, were for altering several Things, appointed by that Book, is certain, as appears by one of them, who propos'd to the rest of his Brethren^f, that the *Rubric*, which gave Women a Liberty to baptize, in Case of Necessity, might be altered; and that making the Sign of the Cross in Baptism, might be quite left out of the Office:

^c 4 Eliz. chap.
Vol. II. p. 485.

^f *Colliers's Ecclesiastical History,*

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And, in the Lower-House of Convocation, there were no fewer than thirty-three, beside the Prolocutor, who signed, and offered a Paper to that House; not only against all *Lay-Baptism*, and that by *Midwives* in particular, but also for omitting the *Cross* in that Office; and that Kneeling at the Sacrament might be left to the Discretion of the *Ordinary* (or Bishop) for him to dispense with the Use of it: And lastly, that the Article (as it stood among those made in King *Edward's* Time) concerning the Censure of such as refused the Ceremonies then prescribed, might be altered or mitigated: And if these Alterations had been then agreed to, perhaps it might have prevented the farther Increase of those *Puritans*; since all Things, at which they could have just Exception in the public Form of Worship, being either omitted or left indifferent, they could have had no Plea justifiable to excuse their not coming to the public Prayers, nor using the Sacraments in the Manner prescribed by the *Rubric*. But, it was carried by a considerable Majority in both Houses, that all Things, in the Form of Common-Prayer, should remain as they were in that Book, without any Amendments, even so much as to *Baptism by Midwives*,
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which was not forbid, 'till the Beginning of King *James's* Reign, as I said before; and that was by his particular Direction, at the Conference between the Bishops, and the *Puritan* Divines, at *Hampton-Court*; in which the King shewed himself no indifferent Moderator ^s.

But to return: The two Houses of Convocation, held 1562, not only retained the former Ceremonies; but, when they had agreed to all those Articles, made in King *Edward's* Reign, with a very few Alterations, that very Day, after a rough Draught of them had been subscribed to by the Lower-House, and by at least ten of the Bishops, this 20th *Article* was shuffled in, and immediately passed by the whole Convocation: I suppose, not only to give the greater Authority to those Ceremonies, but also to invest the Church with a Power to declare in dubious Points, what Doctrines were to be received for Orthodox, and what not.

But, let the Cause of adding this Article be what it will, it certainly pleased the Queen herself, who was always very zealous for maintaining those Ceremonies and Habits, during her whole Reign; not-

^s 1603. Vid. the *Phoenix*, N^o VI.

withstanding the Indeavors used by the more moderate Bishops to qualify them, so as they might give less Offense to tender Consciences; and consequently bring into the Church all *Dissenters*, except the *Papists*. But, whether she acted thus thro' a Principle of Religion, or from her natural Inclination to Pomp and Splendor in Religions, as well as Civil Performances, I shall not determine; only this is certain, that she never would consent to any Alterations: And she, more than once, expressly forbade the Parliament to receive any Bills, concerning Matters of State, or Religion, without first acquainting her with the Purport of them.

But yet, all this Stiffness in the Queen, and the major Part of her Clergy, did not produce those good Effects they expected; for, as to the *Roman Catholics*, who never came to Church, but purely to save their Persons and Estates from the Penalties inflicted by the Statute, since Pope *Pius V* had, by his *Bull*, forbid their joining in *Divine Service* with our *heretical* Ministers; and they were but a few: So that all Hopes of gaining them over, by retaining those Ceremonies, proved abortive; and so remain to this Day. And, as for the *Puritans*, this Article

was so far from converting them, that it rather made them more obstinate: Since, by adding that Article, they charged the Bishops and Clergy with assuming to themselves the same absolute Power they denied to the Pope, and any Council called by him; which Charge, as it has been partly considered already, so it shall be more hereafter, when you come to give me your Sense upon the following Clause in it.

But to proceed: One farther bad Effect it had, was, that the strictest, and most learned, of those *Puritan* Ministers refused then to subscribe to it, as also to several Injunctions made in the fourth Year of her Reign: However, notwithstanding this, the Majority of them were suffered to hold their Ecclesiastical Dignities, and other Preferments, as I have observed. But the Reasons why they found so much Favor at that Time were, because most of them had been Exiles, for their Religion, in *Queen Mary's* Reign; and beside, they could not tell where to find Men so well qualified, either for good Life or Learning, to fill up their Places, if they should have turned them out: So that *Non-Conformity* daily increased; and tho' Conventicles are not mentioned to have been then commonly held,

held, yet the Churches became sensibly less frequented ; and People took the Liberty to say their Prayers, after their own Way, at home, or else met in private Houses to hear those Ministers, who were most zealous against wearing the Surplice, and using these Ceremonies : But about five Years after, *viz.* in 1567, you may find divers Conventicles, of the *Puritan Dissenters*, to have been held in *London*, and other Places.

P. I am obliged to you, *Sir*, for your Information in this Matter ; for, tho' I have been longer in *England* than you, yet I never knew that the *Puritans* Separation, from the Church of *England*, commenced so early : But you have said nothing, as yet, of their rejecting *Episcopacy*, as an Innovation not to be found in the *New Testament* : Pray did they likewise deny this from their first Separation ?

R. I do not say they did, because that Opinion was not then commonly received among them ; for I cannot find any one publicly maintained it, in *England*, 'till about twelve Years after the restoring of the *Reformed Religion* ; when one *Cartwright*, Fellow of *Trinity College* in *Cambridge* (so eminent for his Learning, that he was made Divinity-

Professor in that University) first openly maintained, that Arch-Bishops, and Arch-Deacons, ought to be suppressed, as not being to be found in the Holy Scriptures; and that the very Office of Bishops differed not from that of Presbyters: He was also against all Bishops Chancellors, Arch-Deacons, and their Officials, and several Regulations he would have to be made in the Church. Tho', for thus openly maintaining these Opinions in his public Lectures, and Sermons, he was turned out both of his Professor's Place, and likewise of his Fellowship, yet he was not at all mortified with this Disgrace; for, immediately setting up a private Congregation of those of his own Way, he not only left off the Ceremonies, but the whole Book of Common-Prayer, and assumed the Form used at *Geneva*; from whence (in his Travels thither) he had borrowed these Doctrines; *Beza*, who had succeeded *Calvin* in that Church, not being so favorable to the Church-Government, and Service used in *England*, as his Predecessor.

In Effect, from that Time forward, not only he, but several other Ministers, renouncing their former Subscriptions to the Articles and Canons, turned down-
right

right *Non-Conformists*; and not only refused to wear the Surplice, and submit to the Ceremonies, but also set up private Meetings of Ministers of the same Persuasion, to consider how they might ward off the *Prosecution* commenced against them for their *Non-Conformity*; for which many of them were deprived of their Livings, and silenced from preaching by the then Arch-Bishop. From these turned-out Men, *Non-Conformity* grew up, and they gathered private Congregations in divers Cities, and Market-Towns, for a Subsistence, where they found People enough, not only of the common Sort, but also of the Gentry, ready to receive them. They had likewise some Friends at Court: Her Majesty's chief Favorite, the Earl of *Leicester*, and other great Men, interposed as far as they durst in their Behalf; but, whether they acted thus thro' a Principle of Religion, or with worldly politic Designs, I own my self ignorant.

Thus Matters stood all the Remainder of her Reign, most of the *Puritans* persisting in direct Separation from the established Church, notwithstanding all the Indeavors of the Bishops to suppress them, for, as yet, there were not any Laws made against their Meetings; and the

Bishops prosecuting them, in their Spiritual Courts, did but the more exasperate those *Dissenters*, who shewed their Resentments, by dispersing severe Libels both against their Persons and Callings, which Procedure of theirs was not to be justified: Not but that among them were some very learned and moderate Men, who did not wholly leave the Communion of the Church, because they were satisfied in their Consciences of the Antiquity and Advantages of *Episcopacy*, above any other Form of Church-Government, and of the Church's Authority in imposing different Rites and Ceremonies; yet, not seeing any great Usefulness, or Necessity for them, they thought, if they could remove, and take away those Stumbling-Blocks, it would be a good Means to bring over the greater Part of the *Dissenters*: And therefore, not long after King *James I's* Accession to the Throne, there was a Petition presented to his Majesty, in the Names of more than a thousand Ministers of the Church of *England*, for a Reformation of the *Liturgy*, and of Ecclesiastical Discipline; by leaving out the *Cross* in Baptism, and Interrogatories then made to Infants; and that Baptism might not be administered by Women,

with

with other Alterations too tedious now to enumerate. As to Discipline, for removing Ministers who either would not, or could not preach ; and so likewise, against *Excommunications* issued out in the Names of Lay-Persons, such as Chancellors, and their Officials, &c. as also for trifling Affairs, &c. with other Matters, for which I refer you to the Writers of those Times. Thereupon the King graciously condescended to hear such Delegates as the Petitioners should appoint to attend him for that Purpose ; and four Persons were pitched upon, *viz.* two from each of the Universities, being the most remarkable of that Party for Learning. These, coming before his Majesty, were met by the Arch-Bishop of *Canterbury*, and several of the Bishops and Deans, as Commissioners for the Church. It is not very necessary to give you the Particulars of that famous Conference, in which the King himself acted (as I observed) the Part of a Moderator : But, tho' at first he seemed to approve of the Alteration of several Things the Petitioners proposed ; yet, when the Bishops had returned their Answers to them, he declared his Opinion on Behalf of the present Establishment, and did not agree to any Change,

Change, either in Discipline, or Ceremonies, which he said were very ancient and decent, and therefore lawful to be enjoined; only he spake against Infant Baptism by Midwives, even in Cases of Necessity, and commanded the Bishops to forbid it for the Future; but without declaring the passed to be void and invalid.

I shall not take upon me to determine what would have been the Consequence of these Alterations, desired by the moderate *Puritans*; whether they might have brought over the more rigid ones to the Communion of the Church: But it only served to make the *High-Church* Party the more strict and severe, in pressing a thorough Conformity, as appears by that Body of Canons, which passed in the following Convocation, of 1603 (some of which you have cited) which make all *Dissenters* whatever liable to *Excommunication*.

P. Sir, It seems to me, that the concluding of these Canons, viz. *let such an Offender* (as is there mentioned) *be excommunicated, ipso Facto*, does not only decree his being liable to *Excommunication*, but that he was declared actually *excommunicated, ipso Facto*, by that very *Act*, without any farther Process.

R. Sure,

R. Sure, *Sir*, you carry the Words of those Canons farther than the true Sense and Intention of them will reach: For, pray, how could any such Offender be liable to that Sentence, 'till he was first lawfully cited in the Bishop's Court, and convicted of the Breach of those Canons? Except you will suppose the Offender to have voluntarily executed that Sentence upon himself. Therefore I take the Meaning of those Words, *let him be excommunicated, ipso Facto*, to be only this; let that Sentence be inflicted on him without Delay, or Excuse, whenever the Offender shall be lawfully convicted before the *Ordinary*, or his proper Deputy.

I suppose you are satisfied with this Explication; and therefore I will proceed. The Strictness of those Canons, which required the Party to declare he subscribed to the *Rubric*, and all the *Articles*, had no other Effect, than the depriving several considerable Ministers of their Livings, and that still widened the Breach: For, in their next Pamphlets, they declared those Ceremonies, not only unnecessary, but altogether unlawful; and the Surplice to be a Rag of *Popery*. Yet, notwithstanding the Severity used against them, I do not find that Party of *Puritans* to have decreased, during this
King's

King's Reign ; which some indeed impute to Arch-Bishop *Abbot's* remiss Government ; and for which it was thought he was suspended by King *Charles I*, *ab Officio*^h ; tho' I rather believe it was on another Account : However, upon that Suspension, his Archiepiscopal Power was, by Letters-Patent, taken from him, and put into the Hands of four or five Bishops ; of whom *Laud*, then of *Bath* and *Wells*, was one ; and it was no Wonder, if the Prosecution both of the Clergy, and *Lay-Non-Conformists* was again renewed, since he exerted himself the most vehemently of all the Bishops against them : And when, some Years after, upon *Abbot's* Decease, he was by the King advanced to that See, being supported as well by the Civil, as Ecclesiastical Power, he prosecuted them with such uncommon Violence, that he forced a great Number of both Ministers, and wealthy Tradesmen, to transport themselves into *New-England* ; where they set up a Church, and Civil Government, wholly after their own Model. Divers likewise fled into *Holland*, which proved very much to the Prejudice of the *English* Trade and In-

^h See *Rusſworth's* History, Vol. I. p. 435. 3 *Car. I.*
terest.

terest. Thus were Matters carried on during the eleven Years he acted as *Prime Minister* in all Affairs, 'till, upon King *Charles's* ill Success against the *Presbyterians* in *Scotland*, who had taken up Arms on Account of the *New Liturgy*, which he would have imposed upon them without the Confirmation of a national Synod, or general Assembly, he was forced to summon a Parliament, which not only impeached that Archbishop of Treason, but also gave full Liberty to all those who had left *England*, upon the Account of their Consciences, to return home. I need not farther enlarge on what happened afterwards; that, thro' the Instigation of the *Scottish Presbyterians*, the Long-Parliament, to have their Assistance against the King's then-prevailing Forces, took the Covenant; whereupon followed the abolishing not only of the *Common-Prayer*, and Ceremonies, but also of *Episcopacy* itself, so far as several Ordinances of Parliament, without the Royal Assent, could do it; in which it must be confessed, the *Presbyterian* Party acted with as great (if not greater) Violence over the Consciences of such as dissented from them, than ever the Bishops had done towards the *Presbyterians* (as they now began to be called)

called) while the King and Church had sufficient Power to put those severe Laws in Execution: But, on the other Hand, the *Non-Conformists* had the same Measure meted to them, when, upon King *Charles II's* Restoration, Episcopacy, and the Liturgy were again established; and then, not only all Ministers, who refused to conform, and abjure the Covenant, were, by the Act of *Uniformity*, deprived of their Livings; and all private Meetings for Religious Worship (where the Common-Prayer was not read) were strictly prohibited, under severe Penalties, both upon the Preacher and the Hearers. Thus Matters stood during the Reign of that King, who sometimes indeed relaxed those penal Laws; but then again, at other Times, he caused them to be as rigorously put in Execution, according as he found it most conducing to his Design of granting to *Roman Catholics* the same Privilege of being exempted from the Penalty of the Laws as the *Dissenters*, which both for a While enjoyed, by Virtue of his Declaration of *Indulgence*. And it was upon the same View, that the late King *James* issued out his Declaration; and the more to mortify the Clergy, he commanded it should be read by them in all the Churches of *England*,
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which

which was one great Means of lessening their Affections, and of their no farther confiding in his first Promises, to *maintain, and support the Church, as by Law established.*

P. I have heard your long Narrative, of the Rise and Progress of *Puritanism*, or *Presbytery*, here in *England*, with Abundance of Patience ; but I know not to what Purpose you have made it, except to inform me, that Mens following their *private Judgments*, contrary to that of the *Catholic Church*, has been the Cause of this, as well as of all other *Heresies* and *Sects* ; and I was sufficiently satisfied of that before. Therefore, the *Presbyterians* themselves might have been convinced of this, when, not long after, they had got their Government and Discipline settled, according to the *Covenant*, the new Sectaries, called *Independents*, sprung up. These declared the *Presbyterian* Form and Discipline, to be repugnant to what was prescribed by the *Word of God*, and so was not to be complied with : And this was, indeed, but turning the same Argument upon the *Presbyterians*, which they had used before against the Prelates, and they were but paid in their own Coin ; and so it will be, what national Religion soever is set up.

up. Some Mens *private Judgments* will still take Occasion to find Fault in it, and consequently deny being obliged in Conscience to believe, or profess it, unless they are constrained, by severe Penalties; if not to believe it (for that I own cannot be done by Force) yet so far as not to presume to oppose it: And, without this Power in the Civil Magistrate, I confess, the very *Infallibility* of the *Catholic Church* would have no Influence upon any, but those who were already convinced of the Necessity of that Doctrine, as the Ground of all Ecclesiastical Unity.

R. I thought, *Sir*, you had better understood the Reason of my giving you this History of *Non-Conformity* in *England*; which was, not only to rectify your Mistakes about it, as if it had been but a late Opinion, whereas it is as ancient as the *Reformation* itself, which I have proved to you by undeniable Matters of Fact; but also that, notwithstanding all the Opposition made against it, it has still subsisted, and the *Dissenters* could never be brought over to the Church, by all those severe Prosecutions, carried on against them for so many Years together. And therefore, I think King *William*, and his Parliament, passed a
very

very wise (as well as a very merciful) Act, in taking off the Penal Laws, made against the public Exercise of their Religious Worship, and granting them that *Toleration* and *Indulgence* they now enjoy.

As to what you say concerning the Necessity of Civil Penalties, in order either to drive Men into the established Church, or to make them conceal their Opinions to the contrary, you own, *that Force has no Power over Mens Consciences*; and therefore, can only serve to make them *Hypocrites*, and no Way increase the Number of *Christ's* true Subjects. As to your Necessity of severe Penalties, you would do well to explain your self; for if you mean a *Spanish Inquisition*, or the Way used in *France* by *Dragoons*, at whose Discretion the late King left the poor *Protestants* (as God left *Job* to that of the Devil) to all Sufferings, except the actual putting them to Death; I grant indeed, that such a Procedure may prove effectual, because it tends to the utter Ruin and Destruction of all Persons, who will not comply with those Edicts; or else must force them to abandon their Country, and betake themselves to a voluntary Exile, as I, and many Thousands of others of our Compatriots, have been

constrained to do ; unless we would have played the *Hypocrites*, and owned that Religion to be the only true one, which we believed, in our Consciences, to be false. But, I suppose you will allow that, by the same Right of using Methods of compelling Men into the Church, they might as well (if the King had thought fit) have been forced to declare themselves *Mahometans* ; since Force is no more a proper Means to propagate a true, than a false Way of worshiping God. But, I am very well satisfied, that, as *Christ* never ordained such cruel and violent Methods to make Men become Subjects to his Spiritual Kingdom, so neither does the Church of *England* require any such Thing from Princes, as her *nursing Fathers*. Divers great Men of the Church formerly thought, indeed, that such Penalties (as Imprisonment, with Fines and Mulcts out of Mens Estates, for deserting the Church, and frequenting private Meetings) would have brought the *Dissenters* over to their Communion, but they have found themselves wretchedly mistaken ; for they have only made them more inflexible in their Opinions : Therefore, it is certainly the safest Way, as well as the most *Christian*, to overcome Men by the Power of Truth, and the

the Force of Arguments, and friendly Persuasions, because *the Kingdom of Christ is not of this World* ; i. e. the Divine Mysteries and Precepts, contained in the *New Testament* (and, as such, were no Way discoverable, but by divine Revelation) cannot be blindly submitted to, without a real Conviction upon the Heart of the Truth of them ; and much less can they be enforced by temporal Rewards, and Penalties : For that is one evident Sign of the Weakness of any Religion, which (like *Mahometanism*) maintains, that its Faith may be propagated by the Sword, and all Apostates from it ought to be put to Death. The same I may likewise say of all particular Religions, and Professions whatsoever, which make Use of the same violent Methods.

P. I must own the Arguments you have used against propagating the *Christian Religion*, by Civil Penalties, seem to favor of the Meekness and Moderation of the *primitive Christians* : But however, that *Christian* Magistrates, truly *Orthodox*, and *Catholic* in their Faith, may enact Laws to require *Heretics*, and *Schismatics*, to come into the Bosom of their Church, and prohibit them from going to private Conventicles, under

some certain Penalties (still saving Life) I cannot but think both lawful and necessary: For otherwise, how can a national Church subsist, and be preserved in any Kingdom, or Common-wealth, if every Man should be left to follow his own *private Judgment*, and chuse to be of what Religion he liked best? And, that all *Christian* Princes, and Common-wealths, have ever thought it very suitable to the Doctrine of the Gospel, thus to defend and maintain that which they believed to be the only true, and orthodox Religion, is in Fact so certain, that I know no Government in *Europe*, except the *United Provinces*, in the *Low-Countries*, but what do exercise this Power against all Sorts of *Dissenters* from their established Religion; and tho' they do not make it Penal, not to profess the *Calvinian Confession of Faith*, settled by the Synod of *Dort*; yet, I am credibly informed, that they do not allow any *Protestants*, of what other Profession soever, to hold and injoy Offices and Places, Civil or Spiritual, either in their Church or State: And, that the present Laws in *England* respect not only *Roman Catholics*, but likewise all *Protestant Dissenters*, you cannot doubtless but know, if you have been so long here, as you say.

R. I

R. I do not deny what you say to be true, as to those Countries: And, as for the *United Provinces*, that they do not commonly chuse Magistrates of their Cities, and great Towns, but from such as are of their own Profession; yet, this is not from any prohibitory Law to the contrary; neither is there any *Test*, or *Subscription*, required from those who are to be so chosen into Offices. But what is done of this Kind, is purely owing to a certain tacit Agreement, or Combination among themselves, to chuse only those they know to be of their own Church: And I hear the like was done in several Corporations in *England*, before the Act against *Occasional Conformity*. But however, of late Years (particularly, since the Death of their Stadtholder King *William*) they always preferred those, called *Anti-Remonstrants*, to all Civil Offices in his Disposal; and even now, several *Arminians* are chosen *Burgomasters* of their Cities, and sent as Deputies to their General Assembly of the Estates: Indeed, before the late Prince of *Orange* was declared Stadtholder, the famous *De Wit*, Pensioner for *Amsterdam*, was (as I have been credibly informed) a professed *Arminian*. But,

however it may be with Relation to Civil Employments, yet, as to the Military, those of all Religions are alike capable of them; and during the late War with *France*, not only divers Captains and Colonels, but one of their Lieutenant-Generals, was a *Roman Catholic*.

So that, indeed, the several Commonwealths of the *United Provinces*, are an evident Proof (against what you maintain) that a national Religion may be preserved without Civil Penalties; so long as Offices, and Preferments, Ecclesiastical and Civil, are only conferred on those of the national Religion: And I own the former to be wholly possessed by those Ministers who subscribed to the Synod of *Dort*, which is made a necessary Condition to their Admission into any Congregation with Cure of Souls; but, as for the other Employments, they are left more at large.

But that all Laws, concerning the outward Profession of a Religion, established with Sanctions of Rewards and Penalties, are to be accounted only as political Institutions for the Preservation of the Civil Peace, by Unity and Agreement in Opinions about particular Rites and Ceremonies in Worship, and not
what

what is properly the right worshipping of God *in Spirit, and in Truth*, is very evident ; for if *Christ* had ever designed such Sanctions, as a fit and necessary Means to advance and uphold his Kingdom over Mens Souls in this Life, he would certainly have ordained that all, or at least, the major Part of the Civil Powers, ever since his Ascension into Heaven, should have been of that Religion which he himself taught: Whereas any one may find, by those Relations we receive from Travellers, as well as by his own Observation, that there are, at least, twenty *Mahometan* and *Heathen* Kings, and Princes, beside those of several Sects and Professions among *Christians*, who all endeavor by Civil Sanctions to maintain and propagate the Religion they themselves profess.

But, since I have already shewn my Thoughts about the Necessity and Legality of imposing Civil Penalties for Non-Compliance with the national Religion, and as possibly you may be tired with this long Conversation, I shall either quite take my Leave of you now, or if you desire to discourse farther on this Subject, I will meet you here to-mor-

row after Dinner, that we may then have Time enough to go thro' with our Controversy.

P. Sir, I very willingly accept your Offer, and am in the Interim your most humble Servant.

End of the first DIALOGUE.



T H E



T H E
Second DIALOGUE.



P.  E L L, *Sir*, I am come according to your Appointment : And, to resume the Thread of our Discourse, we will, if you please, leave *Holland* to their Liberty in chusing their own Religion, and return to *England*. Now, pray, permit me to ask you this Question : If the civil Powers here (whom you own to be of the Orthodox Faith) have not Authority to inforce the Laws, they inact, for establishing a national Religion, and making all their Subjects conform

form to it, how can you justify them for inacting so many Laws, as they have done, against *Protestant Dissenters*? You must own, they were either prudently and justly inacted, or they were not: If the former, you have no Reason to declare against the like Edicts in *France*: But, if they were not, why then have they not been repealed since the late *Toleration*? You confess there have been very severe ones inacted against them, especially that towards the Close of Queen *Elizabeth's* Reignⁱ, whereby it is declared, “ That any one above the Age
 “ of Sixteen, who refused coming to
 “ Church, to hear Divine Service, for
 “ the Space of one Month, without law-
 “ ful Cause, or should, by express
 “ Words, Printing, or Writing, go about
 “ to dissuade any of her Majesty's Sub-
 “ jects from coming to Church, to such
 “ Service, or to receive the Communion
 “ according to the Laws, &c. and being
 “ thereof lawfully convicted, should be
 “ commanded to Prison, there to re-
 “ main without Bail, 'till they should
 “ conform, and yield themselves to come
 “ to some Church, or usual Place of
 “ Common-Prayer, and hear Divine Ser-

ⁱ Vid. 35 *Eliz.* chap. 1.

“ vice,

“ vice, and make such open Submission,
 “ and Declaration of their Conformity,
 “ as is by that Act afterwards appointed.”
 Hence you may be satisfied, that this
 Queen, and her Parliament, did not
 think it unlawful to make almost as se-
 vere Laws against those, who then stiled
 themselves *Protestants*, as the late King
 of *France* did Edicts against the *Hugo-*
nots; only these were to be executed by
 the Civil Magistrates, and those left to
 the Discretion of his *Dragooners*. There-
 fore you have no such mighty Reason to
 arraign our late King's Edicts of exces-
 sive Severity, as to that Particular. This
 I speak not to justify all those Proceed-
 ings, but only to shew, that the Church,
 to which you have now joined your self,
 does not think inflicting corporal Penal-
 ties to be contrary to the Laws of *Christ*,
 tho' appointed for Offenses which pro-
 perly belong to Ecclesiastical Cognizance
 and Censure.

R. I am no Stranger to this Act of
 Parliament; nor do I deny but it is, in
 Effect, as you have cited it; but you have
 forgot one material Clause therein, which
 makes the *Roman Catholics* liable to the
 like Penalties; as appears by the follow-
 ing Words, as near as I can remember
 them, viz. “ Or any others, who shall
 “ go

“ go about to move or persuade any of
 “ her Majesty’s Subjects, within these
 “ her Dominions, to deny, or withstand,
 “ her Majesty’s Power and Authority,
 “ in Causes Ecclesiastical”. Now, who
 were so guilty of this, as the *Roman Catholics*, who then refused to take the Oath
 of Supremacy, and do still, to this very
 Day? And, if you will consider the
 Time when this Act was made, you may
 find, that it was not so much to restrain
 Mens *private Opinions*, in Matters of Religion,
 as to hinder their declaring them
 in Public, which had lately tended to
 manifest Sedition: For, not long before
 its inacting, two mad Enthusiasts (*Cop-
 pinger* and *Arthington* ^k, I think their
 Names were) had the Impudence, openly
 in *Cheapside*, to proclaim their Master,
 one *Hacket*, a Yeoman, (at first a *Puritan*)
 not only to be a *Prophet*, but a *King*,
 under *Jesus Christ*, over all *Europe*; by
 which traytorous Procedure, they hoped
 to have raised a Rebellion of the *London-
 Mob*; but, failing in their Design, and
 no one offering to stir in their Behalf,
 they were soon apprehended, arraigned,
 and found guilty of Treason. Indeed,
 only *Hacket* was executed; for *Cop-*

^k Vid. *Conspiracy for pretended Reformation.*

pinger starved himself in Prison, and *Arthington*, upon his Repentance, and Promise of making farther Discoveries, was pardoned. This caused the Queen, and her Parliament, to make this Statute against all who refused going to Church, without distinguishing, whether they were *Papists*, or *Protestants*: But, I do not find it was often put in Execution, during all her after Reign; and, in those of her Successors, it was quite laid aside: But, whether this Lenity proceeded from the Act's being looked on as too severe, or that it would have involved so many in the same Crimes, that the Jayls could not have contained them, I am not certain. Howsoever that was, I must freely own, that it is the Right of all Supreme Powers, in every Nation, to assert their own Authority, and to judge who are its Enemies; and, as such, to punish the Disobedient: But, it must be withal acknowledged, that thus acting does not proceed from any new Power, or Authority, conferred by *Jesus Christ*, but by the common Law of Nature, or Reason, which has given, not only to all natural Persons, but to Bodies-politic, a sufficient Power to preserve themselves in that Station wherein God has thought good to place them, for the Weal and
 Happy

Happiness of the Civil Society, over which they preside. Wherefore, upon this Supposition, all Sorts of *Recusants*, to the Religion established, were then looked on as seditious Persons, and disaffected to the Government, in Church and State; and the Preamble, to the said Act, plainly declares that to be the sole Reason for making it. Nor can I blame the Queen, or Parliament, for adding also another Clause, yet more severe against them, *viz.* " That whoever (being so in Prison) should, after the Space of three Months, refuse to conform, and make his, or their, Submission in the Manner there required, that then he should take an Oath to *abjure* the Realm (*i. e.* to go into some other Country) and, if he refused to take that Oath, and was found in *England* after forty Days, he was to be executed as a Felon ". Now, as this Act took in all *Popish*, as well as *Protestant Recusants*, who refused going to Church, that might be one Reason why, in the succeeding Reigns, the *Roman-Catholics* found more Favor, than under that Queen. But there was yet another very severe Act passed in her Reign, and still in Force, which makes it Treason in any one to be reconciled to the Church of
Rome,

Rome, as well as in the Person who should so reconcile him ; which was done upon this Consideration, because the Government looked on such Person, thus perverted to that Religion, as one departed from his Allegiance to his natural Liege-Lord, by owning the Pope for *Supreme Head* of the *Church*, who, as such, claims a Power of deposing Kings, and absolving their Subjects from all Allegiance to them ; which all *Roman-Catholics* (except some few of the *Gallican Church*) are forced, under Pain of Excommunication, to hold and maintain at this Day.

And, to shew myself a fair Opponent, I will likewise allow that, if the late King of *France* had found the *Protestants* to have frequently taken up Arms against him, and apprehended their repeating such Rebellion, in Hopes of recovering their former Liberties and Privileges ; I say, if *Lewis XIV*, had issued out his Edict, “ That, because he did
 “ not look upon them as loyal Subjects,
 “ who would no longer yield Obedience
 “ to his lawful Authority than they
 “ were compelled by Force ; therefore
 “ all such as would not, by a Time therein
 “ prefixed, renounce their Errors, and
 “ subscribe the *Creed*, appointed by the
 “ Council

“ Council of *Trent*, should sell off their
 “ Effects, and go out of the Kingdom,
 “ with their Wives and Children”.
 This, tho’ very severe, had not been unjust, so long as he believed their abiding there might prove dangerous to the public Peace and Safety, of which he was the sole Judge. So, upon much more justifiable Grounds, the present Government, as now settled here, might, whenever they should think fit, pass an Act to banish, in like Manner, all those, of what Religion soever, who should refuse to swear Allegiance to King *George*, and *abjure* the *Popish* Pretender; since all such Refusers might very well be supposed ready to join with any foreign Powers, who would undertake to bring him over hither.

And, if King *Lewis* had done no more than this, howsoever impolitic it had been in him, to banish so many peaceable Subjects, who had, in his Minority, refused joining with the Prince of *Condé*, who might have deposed him, and got into the Throne himself; yet, it had been justifiable, as supposed to be necessary for the public Welfare of his Kingdom. But, to deal with those unhappy People as he did, neither to let them depart in Peace, nor yet stay in their own
 Country

Country with any Quiet and Safety, except they would profess and be of the King's Religion, was such a Piece of Barbarity, that the *Spanish Inquisition* did not think fit to use towards the *Moors*, when they were commanded, by the King's Edict, to profess *Christianity*, or else to depart from his Dominions.

P. I acknowledge what you have said seems very reasonable: But then, if you are a true Son of the Church, of which you now profess to be, you must likewise acknowledge, that the civil Powers, as *nursing Fathers* to that Church, which they believe to be the only true one, may (nay, it is their Duty to) protect and defend it with sufficient Sanctions, by keeping in Awe those who go about to disturb her Unity, and encouraging such as are of the same Profession, at least, outwardly, by bestowing on them only all Offices, and Places of Trust, in the Government: For, except this be done, the public Peace, which very much depends upon Mens Uniformity in their Religious Worship, by Law established, cannot otherwise be upheld; because it has been ever observed, that two different Professions in Religion cannot both of them enjoy the Countenance and Protection of the Government, without

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runing the Nation into such Factions, and Jealousies, towards each other, as would probably (if not in Time prevented) terminate in some notable Civil War, or Rebellion: Therefore, those of the Religion established in a Nation, may desire some penal Laws to be made, to discourage *Dissenters* from openly affronting her Authority, by propagating their contrary Doctrines; and give Incouragement to such as conform to it, by all due Rewards, &c. either of Honors, or such Posts of Credit, as they find them capable of in the Civil Government: And, if the Penalties so appointed should, by Chance, happen to be inflicted upon some conscientious Persons, who might suffer more than they deserved, or that such Preferments, or Rewards, should be conferred on a few complying Atheists, and Hypocrites; yet still, the true Church-Men do not desire these Severities, merely to exercise Cruelty, or domineer over Mens Consciences, but purely for a pious End, the Glory of God, and the necessary Defense of the national Religion, as by Law established, which could not well subsist without such Penalties: And if those so inflicted, or the Rewards so conferred, should sometimes happen to make Men Hypocrites, this

is

is accidentally, and, perhaps, they might have been so without them. But, however, the visible (tho' not the real) Church of *Christ* is thereby advanced; and, since Men cannot judge of the Sincerity of others, but by their outward Profession, it is all one, with Respect to the Public, whether they really believe what they profess, or not, provided they do outwardly conform to the Religion, by Law established in that Kingdom.

R. I am very glad you have proposed this Argument; because I find it has been much urged by some, who would be thought the only true Friends to the Church of *England*: Therefore, in order to confute, and expose this Topic, as being somewhat too dogmatical, and of dangerous Consequence to *Christ's* Kingdom (that is, the true Religion) into which Men might neither be terrified by Penalties, nor allured by worldly Rewards, I shall here propose two or three *Queries*.

First, Who are here meant, by the *national Church*, whether the Clergy alone, or the Clergy and Laity together? *Secondly*, What Civil Powers are here understood, who must thus shew themselves *nursing Fathers* to the established Church, whether all Kings and States in general,

or only such as profess *Christ's* true Religion? *Thirdly*, Whether such Powers cannot be truly *nursing Fathers* to the Church, unless they inflict those Penalties you mention on all who shall presume to dissent from her, and bestow all Preferments, and temporal Rewards, only on such as outwardly conform to the Religion established, tho' their real Sentiments may, possibly, be quite otherwise?

P. I cannot readily comprehend the Meaning of those Gentlemen, who advance this Doctrine by their Writings; I not being so well acquainted with them, as to be honored with their Conversation. But if, by *national Church*, they mean the Clergy, or the Pastors and Governors, and the Laity, as under the Notion of their Flock, which is the *Catholic* Sense of that Term; then certainly the greater Reverence should be conferred on, and more Care taken of, the Shepherds, than of the Flock; since, without the former, the latter could not be contained within *Christ's* Fold. To your second *Query* I answer; that not all Kings, or Civil States, can challenge the Honor of being *nursing Fathers* to the Church, established in any Nation, but where those Powers profess the true *Catholic*

tholic Faith, and where likewise the national Church (*i. e.* the Clergy and Laity) are Members of the *Roman-Catholic* Church; which, by Reason of her *Infallibility*, can only claim this Gospel Privilege; all other national Churches, which do not own themselves Parts, or Members of that truly *Catholic* One (let them pretend to ever so much *Certainty* in the Grounds of their Belief) are, notwithstanding, no better than *heretical*, and *schismatical* Assemblies: And their Kings cannot be *nursing Fathers*, tho' they may assume that Title, or any other, such as *Defender of the Faith*, &c. And as to your third *Query*; it is my Opinion, that even *Catholic* Kings cannot shew themselves to be *nursing Fathers* to the *Church*, unless they drive all her Enemies out of her Family, that is, the civil Society; or reduce them to be her good Subjects and Children, by such Penalties as shall be thought most conducing to that Purpose, tho' they may, at first, seem somewhat too severe: And of this Opinion St. *Austin* has, over and over, declared himself, with Respect to the *Donatists* in *Africa*: For, when he found them not to be reclaimed by any gentler Methods, he, at last, approved of such wholesome Severities, as Banish-

ment, Imprisonment, and Confiscation of Goods; but without taking away their Lives.

And so likewise *Catholic* Kings, and other Civil Powers, cannot shew themselves to be true *nursing Fathers* to the *Church*, except they incourage and reward her Children, viz. such as are visibly in her Communion, by temporal Honors and Preferments, let their inward Sentiments be what they will (for they are to answer for that) since they however are an outward Part of the visible Church of *Christ*, which consists of all who profess the true *Catholic* Faith.

R. I thank you, *Sir*, for your ingenuous Answer to my *Queries*; because I find they perfectly agree with the Notions of certain Gentlemen of the present *Church of England*, bating this one Particular, that you of the *Romish* Church lay Claim to all these Privileges on the Account of her *Infallibility*, and these on the supposed *Certainty* and Veracity of their Church, in all her Doctrines and Canons; tho' I must confess, I cannot perceive any very great Difference between you and them, but in Words. As for Instance, whoever is *infallible*, is likewise *certain*, that whatever he believes,

lieves, and teaches others to believe and practise, must be absolutely true ; and he, who thinks himself *certain* of this, and teaches Men accordingly, would be also thought *infallible*, as to those Doctrines and Practises so taught and enjoined ; that is, he supposed his Ideas, or Notions of them, are so *evident* and *certain* in themselves, that it is impossible they should be otherwise ; which is the same as to be *infallibilis, quoad hoc*, i. e. infallible, as to every particular Doctrine so believed and taught ; and likewise as to every Article and Canon enjoined to be subscribed.

Having shewn you how far you and they agree, and how small a Difference there is between both your Opinions, as to these Matters ; I shall next examine, what Authority can be produced from either the *Old* or *New Testament*, to prove the Necessity of maintaining, that Kings, and all other Civil States, cannot shew themselves *nursing Fathers* to the national Church, by Law established, except they inflict Penalties on all who differ from her 'till they conform to her Terms, and bestow the beneficial Places, and Offices of the State, only on such as are of her Communion. First, therefore, I do not find any one Text of Scrip-

ture can be brought to prove, that God himself, in the *Old Testament*, or *Jesus Christ* in the *New*, ever gave the *Jewish* Kings, or *Christian* Emperors, any such Authority, of inflicting Punishments on those who differed from them, in the Belief of divers material Articles of their Religion, and outward Ceremonies: For, if we consult the *Pentateuch*, we shall there find, that any Stranger, who was not a *Jew* by Birth, yet worshiped one God, without any Images, or Idols, might be admitted to live in the Land of *Canaan*, and to enjoy the Protection of the Government, both in their Persons and Estates, without being circumcised, or obliged to observe the *Mosaical* Institution, provided they would but keep to those called the *seven Precepts of Noah*; and these, being stiled *Profelytes* of the *Gate*, were likewise admitted to the public Worship of God, in that they called the *Court* of the *Gentiles*. This was the State of the *Jewish* Religion before their Captivity; and, after their Return, we find that People divided into several Religious Sects of different Opinions, whereof the *Pharisees* and *Sadduces* were the chief: And, tho' the latter believed nothing of the Soul's Immortality, nor a Resurrection of the Body, nor yet, that
 God

God had created any Angels, or other Spirits, and consequently, that there was no such Creature as *Satan*, or a *Devil*; yet, these Men were looked on as Part of the *Jewish* Church and Commonwealth, and enjoyed all the same Privileges and Offices with the *Pharisees*, both in Church and State: And the High-Priest himself might have been a *Sadducee*, for ought I can find to the contrary.

So that, under the Old Law, there were no Penalties inflicted on such *Dissenters*, but only on down-right *Idolaters*, notwithstanding they widely differed from the *Jews* in their external Rites and Ceremonies: And, as for Honors and Preferments, both Sects were alike capable of them, tho' the latter differed from the commonly-received Doctrines above-mentioned, and which surely are much greater Differences than those between the *Roman Catholics*, and the *Church of England Protestants*.

Having shewn you the indulgent Practice of the *Jewish* Church and Commonwealth, as long as it continued, I shall now consider the State of the *Christian* Church, before the Emperor *Constantine's* Conversion, during the Space of more than three hundred Years. The Em-

perors, while *Heathens*, could not shew themselves *nursing Fathers* of that *Church* which they either persecuted, or at best only connived at, or tolerated by Fits ; and yet this persecuted Church, during all that Time, was more remarkable for the Purity of the Lives of her Bishops and Clergy, and I may say the same of her Laity also, than some Years after, when the *Christian* Emperors allowed those of their own Religion greater Favors and Countenance than to the *Heathens* : Yet, notwithstanding this, divers of those who still continued in their former *Heathenism*, were however employed as Generals and Officers of the Army : And, as for the common Soldiers, *Heathens*, as well as *Christians*, were listd even into the *Prætorian* Bands. Nay, with Regard to civil Impleys, those of the *Pagan* Religion were frequently nominated Governors of Provinces, Judges, &c. and *Zosimus* tells us, that even at *Rome*, several of the Senators, if not the major Part of them, were *Heathens*, in his Time, which was above a hundred Years after that of *Constantine* : And thus Things continued, 'till the Reign of *Theodosius II*, and *Valentinian II*, when the Emperors grêw nicer in their Choice, and none but *Christians* were

were admitted into civil or military Offices and Employments; but yet, even this was done without inflicting any Penalties of Life, Fortune, or Estate, on such as refused to be converted, and receive Baptism.

But, if we consider the State of the Church during those Times, the then Civil Powers shewed themselves likewise as indulgent to those stiled *Heretics* and *Schismatics*; for the very most was ever done to the former, was the Banishment of their Leaders, and burning their Books, as they did to *Arius*; and his Followers were only deprived of their Benefices by the Ecclesiastical Councils, or Synods, without the Interposition of the Emperors, or Civil Magistrates. But, for the ordinary Laity, tho' they were looked on as out of the Pale of the Church, yet, not being particularly *excommunicated*, they still remained capable of injoying Civil Offices, both in the Army and Common-wealth; insomuch that we read of several *Gothic* Generals, under *Honorius* and *Arcadius*, who openly professed the *Arian* Heresy. And, as to Toleration of *Heretics*, and *Schismatics*, in the public Profession of their Religion, the *Arians* once had almost got all the Churches of *Constantinople*,
and

and other Cities, into their Power, notwithstanding the Emperor *Theodosius* was a *Catholic* : And, when they were ejected thence by his Edict, yet they were still allowed their Churches, or Meeting-Places, without the Cities. But *Schismatics* (such as the *Novatians*) who agreed with the *Orthodox* in the *Nicene Creed*, found greater Favor : For, as *Socrates*, in his Ecclesiastical History, relates, they were allowed to enjoy their own Bishops, and particular Churches, in that, as well as other Cities, as freely as the *Catholics* did theirs. And these Privileges those *Heretics* and *Schismatics* continued to enjoy for divers Years after, 'till the Time of the Emperor *Theodosius* II, when *Nestorius*, being Patriarch of *Constantinople*, did, by his own Authority, pull down the Church, or Oratory of the *Arians* ; and then likewise the *Macedonian Heretics*, in *Asia*, were treated by a certain Bishop with the like Severities : However the *Novatians* still retained their Churches, the Emperor himself interposing in their Behalf. But it is very remarkable, that this persecuting Prelate, being not long after himself condemned for a *Heretic*, by the Council of *Ephesus*, and refusing to recant, was deprived, and banished into *Egypt* ; and then

then he himself would have been glad of that Liberty whereof he would have deprived all others who differed from his Opinions. And, indeed, whoever will read the Church-Histories of those Times, may soon be satisfied, that the first and most severe Persecutions of one Sort of *Christians*, against others of the same Name, were begun under the *Arian* Emperors, *Constantius* and *Valens*, against those who imbraced the *Orthodox* Faith, contained in the *Nicene* Creed, and would not renounce it; and was afterwards carried on by the *Vandal* Kings, in *Africa*, 'till that Country was reduced under the *Eastern* Empire by *Belisarius*, General for the Emperor *Justinian*. And doubtless those Princes last-mentioned acted thus, being instigated by their *Hetical* Bishops, who, to be sure, told them, that, unless they extirpated all other Professions by Force, they could not shew themselves *nursing Fathers* to the *Church*. But this must be a very false Gloss upon that Text; for, by being *nursing Fathers* to the *Church*, no more could be meant than, that there should come a Time when, under the *Gospel-Dispensation*, the Supreme Civil Powers would favor and protect the Church of *Christ*, consisting of faithful Believers;
but

but without laying heavy Penalties on the other Subjects of the Civil Society, 'till they would own themselves Members of that true Church.

P. Pray, Sir, before you proceed farther, satisfy me, how the Civil Powers, when they became *Christians*, could fulfil this Prophecy, of Kings becoming *nursing Fathers*, and Queens *nursing Mothers* to the *true Catholic Church*? Or how they could be said to favor and encourage *Orthodox* Believers, if they should neither punish those who differed from her, nor confer Rewards on such as were of her Communion, but might distribute them alike to all *Heretics*, *Schismatics*, and *Heathens*, without making any Difference between them, as you here relate the first *Christian* Emperors did?

R. I hope I shall soon clear up this Objection, by first putting you in Mind, that, as to the Main, it is already answered; since you have nothing to say against the first Part of my Argument, viz. That it is not incumbent on a *nursing Father* to punish, or turn out of Doors, all those of his Family who are not of the same Mind with himself: And, as to the second Part, which relates to favoring and encouraging True-Believers,

(III)

Believers, before others, by temporal Benefits and Rewards ; I am not arguing, that *Christian* Princes may not lawfully advance and prefer those of their own Profession, before others who differ from them ; but it does not therefore follow, that they are so strictly bound up by any Precept of *Christ*, as not, on any Account whatsoever, to bestow a Civil Office or Preferment on those who differ from their own, or the national Religion in that Country where they live : For, if that had been so, it had been a Sin for *Constantine* to have employed any other Magistrates than *Christians*, when once he found a Number sufficiently qualified for those Offices and Employments ; or for the *Orthodox* Emperors, his Successors, to have employed *Arian* Officers and Commanders : It was sufficient if, when the Persons were equally fit, they chose rather to prefer those of their own Religion. But this is left to the Discretion of the Civil Powers, as a Matter indifferent, and not prescribed as a Duty : For if so, and that it be likewise true, as you have asserted in your Answer, that no Supreme Powers have a Right to inflict Punishments, nor to confer Rewards, on Account of Religion, but on those who are of the truly *Orthodox* Faith,

Faith, there cannot be a better Argument against the Civil Powers being thus obliged to inflict Penalties on those who are not of the true Church, and to confer their Rewards upon none but such as are of the *Orthodox* Faith: For then those Powers must either themselves judge which is the true *Orthodox* Faith, which they are obliged to profess, before they can be invested with this Privilege (for their being the Supreme Civil Powers cannot give it them) or they must blindly submit their Judgments to the Pope, or else to the major Part of the Clergy of that national Church, wherein they happen to be born. Now, if you will allow the Supreme Civil Powers to judge for themselves, but deny it to all private Persons, you put this great and important Trust and Privilege into the Hands of those, who (being not more infallible, nor less liable to Errors in Religion, than their Subjects, but also) being invested with this Prerogative, have a much greater Power and Opportunity to abuse it, to the great Hurt and Prejudice of all their Subjects, who may justly differ from their Opinions in Religion; and they will also confer those Offices and Preferments you mention, as Incouragements and Rewards to those of their own Profession,

fession, which, you say, cannot properly
 belong to any but *Orthodox* Believers.
 And that this is true in Fact, you cannot
 deny, and so must be sensible that, ac-
 cording to your Principles, all the Of-
 fices and Preferments, in *England*, are
 conferred and disposed of only to such :
 And again, according to the Principles
 of the Religion I now profess, all such
 Civil Offices, in *Popish* Countries, are be-
 stowed on such as are at best but *Schis-*
matics from the true Primitive Church
 of *Christ*. Now, Sir, pray consider
 what your *Catholic* Church (as you call
 it) will gain by this: For, since there are
 no Civil Powers, in any *Christian* Na-
 tion of the World, but do suppose that
 they profess the true *Catholic* Faith, and
 they alone will judge who ought to be
 encouraged by Rewards, and, on the con-
 trary, who are to be prohibited by
 Laws, with proper Penalties annexed to
 them; this necessary Consequence will
 follow, that whatever Faith they profess,
 whether it be *Orthodox* or not, they will
 be sure to exercise this Prerogative, of
 encouraging that Religion they them-
 selves are persuaded to be the only true
 one, and of inflicting Penalties on all
 who obstinately dare to profess any other :
 So that your restraining this Prerogative
 I only

only to such Civil Powers, as are of the true *Catholic* Faith, when it comes to be put in Execution, will do your Religion more Harm than Good; since there are more Civil Powers who do not profess it, than who do: For, granting that, in some Parts of *Europe*, the *Roman-Catholic* Princes, and States, are more numerous than the *Protestants*, yet, taking in the vast Dominions of the *Czar* of *Muscovy*, and other *Christian* Princes in *Europe*, *Asia*, and *Africa*, who are of the *Greek* and *Abyssine* Churches, and who all condemn the Church of *Rome* as *Schismatic*, as much as the *Protestants* of any Profession can do; I say it will follow, that, if they, as *nursing Fathers* to their own national Church, inflict the like Penalties on those who differ from them, and bestow the like Preferments and Rewards on such alone as profess the same Faith with themselves, your *Catholic* Church will find she is no great Gainer by ascribing to her self this absolute Prerogative.

P. I cannot much deny what you say to be Fact, that *Heretical* and *Schismatical* Princes and States will take upon them to judge what is the true Religion, and so will exercise the same Prerogative as those who, *in Deed*, have only a Right

to exercise it: But this Abuse of their Power ought not to be urged as any Argument, why those *Orthodox* Powers, who alone are indued with this Right of inflicting Penalties, and conferring Rewards, on Persons should not exercise it, because this Authority, which *Christ*, by his *Catholic* Church, has conferred upon them, may be usurped by others who have no Right at all; unless you will call it a Right for Princes to be in the Wrong, and yet, will exercise this Prerogative as if they were in the Right; which, except they own our *infallible* Church for the only true one, they cannot justify, but are answerable to God for thus abusing their Power.

R. I am glad, *Sir*, to find this Question reduced within these narrow Bounds, that this Right, of inflicting Penalties, and conferring Rewards, does not belong to all Civil Powers, as such; for then, not only the King of *France*, but even the *Grand Signor*, and the Emperor of *China*, might likewise lay Claim to it: And therefore, when you say *Christ* has, by his Church, conferred this Prerogative only on such Princes and States as profess the truly *Orthodox* Faith (which you think is the *Roman-Catholic*) and since *Christ* has not, by the Gospel, any where

invested Princes, or Civil States, on their becoming *Christians*, with any new Power more than they had before; therefore you do very warily to word it as you do, that *Christ* has done this *by his Church*; whereby, I suppose, you mean that famous Decree of the first *Lateran Council*, “ That if Temporal
 “ Princes do not (being thereof admonished by the Pope) take Care to extirpate all *Heresy* out of their Dominions, their Subjects are declared absolved from their Allegiance, and the
 “ Pope may bestow their Territories on those Princes who will take upon them to put his Holiness’s *Bull* in Execution:” And thus Pope *Pius V*, took upon him to excommunicate Queen *Elizabeth* as a *Heretic*, and Incourager of *Heresy*: But it pleased God to make his *Bull* prove a *Brutum Fulmen*, no better than so much waste Parchment. So that the main Point still remains to be proved, that only the most *Orthodox Christian* Princes were invested by *Christ* with this Prerogative: For it is highly improbable, that *Christ* should therewith indue only those whom you stile *Orthodox* Princes and States, except he had, some Way or other, taken Care to prevent all others who were not so from exercising the
 like

like Power : Since, by your Concession of their being able to judge what this *true Religion* is, they will, by the Abuse of their Power, do the true *Catholic Church* infinitely more Harm than Good, because there are in the World many more false Religions than true ones ; and therefore it is rather an Abuse, than a Right of that Authority with which God has really invested the most *Orthodox* Princes and States, to exercise such absolute Dominion over Mens Consciences, as to force them, by Penalties, to profess that Religion they themselves profess (even should it prove the true one) of the Truth whereof their Subjects are not satisfied in their Consciences. Nay, I will for once grant you, that it is a downright Usurpation for *Heretical* Princes or States to exercise this Prerogative ; yet, so long as they verily think themselves to be of the only true Church of *Christ*, they are as *nursing Fathers* bound to incourage, by all Sorts of Means, those of their own Opinion (whether right, or wrong, I will not trouble myself to inquire) and must persecute those who differ from them, and will not be brought over to their Side : For it holds good in Respect of Princes, as well as of private Persons, that erroneous Con-

sciences do as much oblige those who make that the Rule of their moral Actions, as if they were ever such true ones. So that this Distinction between *Orthodox*, and *Heretical* Princes, as to the Right of inflicting Penalties, and conferring Rewards, in the Manner you have limited it, signifies no more than a mere *Chimera*, when it comes to Tryal. Nor will it at all mend the Matter to suppose, that such *Orthodox* Princes and States, being guided by a Church called *infallible*, cannot mistake, either in inflicting such Penalties, or conferring such Rewards: For, *first*, it ought to be proved, That some Church is really *infallible*; and, *secondly*, That the Church of *Rome* is that only *infallible* Church. Now, this being the main Principle by which Princes are to act in this grand Affair, they must be assured of it, either from their own *private Judgment*, or else from that of the Pope and his Clergy, on whom they depend: If from the former, then those Princes and States, who do not believe this *Infallibility*, have as much Right to make Use of their *private Judgments* in believing the contrary: If from the latter, the *Judgment* of the Pope, and his Clergy, is but the *Persuasion*, or *Judgment*, of those particular Persons,

Persons, met in a Council, or Synod; and, when they have voted themselves *infallible*, it is still no more than that, in their own *particular Judgments*, they are persuaded that they are so: And this can never amount to *Infallibility*, except they can prove themselves to be guided by the same *infallible Spirit* as were the Apostles in the *first Council at Jerusalem*.

As for your last Plea, That the Church does not give Princes this Power thro' any inhumane Disposition, to execute Cruelty towards *Heretics* and *Schismatics*, but only to defend the *Orthodox* Believers in the Exercise of their true Worship of God, against those who would disturb and destroy them in it; and therefore it is necessary to *terrify them, keep them in Awe, and deter them from so doing*; That, by such Penalties, they may be awakened and admonished to examine the Falshood of the Principles by which they have been hitherto influenced; and, upon a due Consideration and Conviction of their Falshood (which is very like to be the Consequence of such a serious Examination) to quit those Errors, and come over to the true *Catholic Church*. And it was upon this Account, that St. *Austin* justified the inflicting on the *Donatists*

any Penalties on this Side Death. Now, in Answer to this, I will yield to you that, be it what Church it will, *Orthodox* or *Heretical*, whosoever shall go about by Force, or open Revilings and Reproaches, to disturb that Form of Religious Worship, which is by Law established, in any Nation, such tumultuous and disorderly Persons may be justly punished, as Disturbers of the public Peace; and Laws may be made to *terrify and keep them in Awe*, in order to deter them from so doing. But then I deny, that the bare professing a Religion, contrary to that so established, and that Peoples meeting openly to worship God in that Form they think most acceptable to him, is any Disturbance of the public Peace, so long as they neither preach, nor openly maintain Principles, or Doctrines, inconsistent with that Peace, and that they maintain the lawful Authority of the Civil Power, under which they live, and from which they receive their Protection. And this I take every Way to be so clear and unexceptionable, that whoever have the Civil Powers on their Side, are for inflicting Punishments on others who dissent from them in outward Forms of Worship: And yet, when once the Tables are turned, and the

the contrary Party get uppermost, they are for using the like Penalties upon those who cannot, in Conscience, comply with them; and then the Sufferers are full of their Complaints, and glad to make Use of this very Plea which, when they were uppermost, they denied to others. And for this, I need go no farther than the Carriage of the *Presbyterians*, in *England* and *Scotland*, when they had the Power in their Hands: For then they were for suffering no public Meetings, but by their *Directory*; and the *Common-Prayer* was, under certain Penalties, forbid to be read in Churches, nay even in private Families: But, when the Tide turned, and Bishops with the Liturgy were again restored, and private Assemblies forbid under severe Penalties, then they began to desire some Forbearance towards tender Consciences: And even the *Roman-Catholics*, in *England*, were much of the like Temper, in Queen *Elizabeth's*, and King *James's* Reigns, when they found themselves under Persecution, for not taking the Oaths of *Supremacy* and *Allegiance*, and conforming to the Religion as by Law established. For, in some *Apologies* and *Petitions*, which I have seen, and which were presented to those Princes for Favor and

and Indulgence, and to be relieved from the Severity of those Laws, which had been made against them, they still in the first Place professed their great Loyalty and Allegiance to their Majesties, but they could not take that Oath, unless they renounced the Pope's Spiritual Authority, as *Christ's* Vicar on Earth; and Peoples Consciences ought not to be forced to do that which they thought was inconsistent with the Principles of the true *Catholic* Religion; So that even those who allow no Liberty of this Kind to any others, yet, when they are got into the Toil, and lie under Hardships for their Consciences, they then think Toleration to such as cannot conform to the established Religion to be no Sin, but to be very just and lawful for the Supreme Powers to grant; and, upon this Account it was, that both King *Charles II*, and King *James II*, granted them that *Indulgence* they desired: And, if all other *Dissenters* did, for a Time, likewise enjoy the same Favor, yet it is well known that the said Toleration was not chiefly designed for them.

So that, in Reality, *Persecution* for *Nonconformity* to the Religion by Law established, instead of awakening Men, and admonishing them to consider the
Reasons

Reasons and Arguments used to bring them over to that Church, does rather serve to make them more sensible of the Injustice of all *Persecution*, and its Unfitness to produce the main End pretended at least to be proposed ; that is, Mens unfeigned Conversion, and not outward and hypocritical Compliance with that imposed Form of Worship: For that may be effected merely by a Sense of the Punishments so inflicted, without any due Consideration of the Force of the Arguments which are used to convince them. For, when Men lie under the Burden of such Penalties, which you say may be inflicted as proper Means for these Ends, it is not likely they can be impartial Judges of the Truth of the Arguments ; since, while they labor under those Pressures, present Ease, and Self-Preservation, are apter to make them comply, than the Weight of any Arguments proposed ; by which Method, a false Religion may be as well propagated, as the true one. But, admit what you allege to be so, that some Kind of Penalties may be thought necessary, either on their Bodies, or Estates, to make Men consider the Arguments proposed for their Conversion ; I would desire to know, how long these Penalties

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ought to continue, and how far should they extend, to what Degrees, in order to make them consider? Let us suppose (for Example-Sake) that the *Roman-Catholics*, in *England*, were to have this Experiment tried upon them, and the King should levy 20*l.* *per* Month upon every one who refused coming to our Church, according to the Law still in Force, so long as they continued *Recusants*; and that it should be enacted by another Law, that whoever did not conform within a Twelve-Month, should pay Half his Estate, and if they remained another Twelve-Month obstinate, then to forfeit the Whole; and when their Estates were gone, if they still should refuse, then their Bodies to be committed to Prison; and, if they proved *Contumax*, they should *abjure* the Realm, according to the Statute of 35 *Elizabeth*, which I have already cited, and I have shewn was intended for *Roman-Catholics*, as much as any other Sort of *Nonconformists*. Now do you think that, if they were asked by proper Officers, Why they had not duly considered the Arguments used for their Conversion, which the Bishop, or Parish-Priest had (according to their Duty) offered to them, that this would be allowed of as a good Plea, that indeed

indeed they had done their Utmost, but could not find their *Judgment* convinced of the Truth, or Force, of those Arguments? And to this those Commissioners should reply, that they had not as yet considered them as they ought, and that, except they would, and that very speedily, they should be banished the Kingdom: Do you think this would be a just and reasonable Proceeding, or not? Pray tell me freely.

P. I must own (as I said before) that, if the Supreme Powers were truly *Catholic*, they might justify their Proceeding in this Manner, with all their *Heretical* and *Schismatical* Subjects; because I am persuaded, that the Arguments for the *Infallibility* of our Religion are of such Weight, that no one, who would make a due Use of his Reason, could possibly resist them: And it was, indeed, chiefly upon this Principle, that our late King *Lewis XIV*, proceeded in that Manner with his *Hugonot* Subjects. He first forbade any Assemblies for their *Heretical* Worship, under great Penalties, and when that would not do, he ordered their Temples, or Meeting-Houses (as you here call them) to be pulled down, and demolished: And when they were still obstinate, after the Bishops and Parish-Priests

Priests had admonished and exhorted them to be reconciled to the true *Catholic, Apostolic* Church; and yet, even then they would not; nor before the King sent his *Dragoons* to quarter upon them at Discretion, and to seize their Persons, in case they would not come over; many of them were, I confess, thrown into Dungeons, or confined, the Men to Monasteries, and the Women to Nunneries, in order to their more easy Conversion, when once their good Fortune was to be separated from the Company of those of their own Way. I own, likewise, their Ministers were at first banished the Kingdom, upon Pain of Death if they returned; some of whom, for holding private Meetings, and Preachments, contrary to the King's Edict, were sent to the Gallies, and others broken on the Wheel; which, tho' it be a little more severe than your Law in *England*, which makes it *Treason* for a Priest to say Mass in any private Family, or to reconcile any one to the *Roman* Church; yet, I think, our King's Proceedings may as well be justified upon the same Foot: For Breaking on the Wheel is the severest Punishment exercised upon Criminals in *France*, as Hanging is here in *England*.

R. I am now in Hopes our Conversation will soon be brought to a Period, since I perceive you are forced to retreat to your former Arguments: For, as first of all, you would allow none but truly *Catholic* Princes to punish People for not conforming to the national Religion established by Law; so now you would seem to mollify the Matter, and, instead of calling it *Persecution*, cover it over with the gentler Name of a bare *Excitement*, or *Admonition*, to such *Heretics* and *Schismatics*, to consider the Force of the Arguments proposed to them; and which you likewise think so convincing, that, if attentively listened to, and well weighed, it must needs be their own Obstinacy, if they are not thoroughly converted.

Now, I must tell you, in my *Judgment*, this is a *Petitio Principii*, or begging the Question, and it runs thro' your whole Argument. For, *First*, you take it for granted, that there is an *infallible* Church, which alone can claim this Privilege of inflicting Penalties, and conferring Rewards. *Secondly*, That the Church of *Rome* is that *infallible* Church. *Thirdly*, That the Arguments to prove this are so plain and convincing, that it is their own Obstinacy alone which hinders

ders their Conversion. But all *Christians*, who are not of your Faith and Persuasion, do absolutely deny these Propositions: And as for the Arguments brought to prove them, they may say they have, with all possible Attention, examined and considered them one by one, and cannot find they carry with them such Strength of Evidence; that all Men must be borne down by them, or be guilty of downright Obstinacy. Moreover, we of the Church of *England* may, with as much Right, impose our Arguments upon you *Papists*, to be believed and complied with for the same Reason of their being so *convincing*: And consequently, if you continue resolutely obstinate, what should hinder but that the Supreme Civil Power may use the like Methods of severe Penalties, under these softer Terms of *Admonitions*, and *Excitements*, to convert you? So that, as to this Point, I am no better satisfied for what you have said, than if you had said nothing at all. For, if all Supreme Civil Powers may claim a Right to inflict any Penalties on those who differ from the Religion established in their Countries, less than directly Hanging, or Burning them, which you seem not to approve of; then all other Penalties

ties may be thus inflicted on *Dissenters* of every Denomination. But there was no Occasion for you to mention this Law at all ; for these penal Laws made against *Priests*, and *Roman-Catholics* in *England*, have been suspended, and not put in Execution for near seventy Years ; notwithstanding the barbarous Treatment which the *Protestants* of all Persuasions have fatally experienced, not only in *France*, but in every other Country where your *Catholic* Religion prevails.

But thus you own the late *French* King proceeded with his *Hugonot* Subjects ; *first*, under great Penalties, to forbid their public meeting at any Religious Assemblies ; *then* to destroy their Temples, or Churches ; and when *this* was done, *next* to execute what remained unfinished by his *Dragoons*, who were to receive their Superiors Directions, on whom they were to begin ; whose Houses they should enter, and be at free Quarters ; whose Goods to plunder ; and whose Persons to vex and torment 'till they would subscribe all the Articles of your *Popish* Creed : And it ended, as you say, either in imprisoning, confining, or sending to the Gallies, all such as refused. Now you may, if you please, term all these Proceedings only *gentle*

Admonitions : But certainly, to a free and ingenuous Soul, such Usage is as bad, or worse, than Death it self. For my own Part, I would rather chuse to be instantly hanged out of the Way, than to be condemned to perpetual Imprisonment, or to Slavery for Life in a Galley: Yet, all this, several zealous *Ministers* suffered, merely for preaching God's Word in their own private Congregations: Nor would the like Treatment of *Jesuits* and *Priests* here (if the Laws were put in Execution to the utmost Severity) serve to justify, or excuse that Cruelty; for, as I told you before, they were never made against them, as Persons of a different Religion, but as Spies and Traytors, who came to debauch the Queen's Subjects from their Allegiance: Nor is it Death for any Priest to say Mass, by the Statute of 29 *Elizabeth*, chap. 1. but only the Penalty of 200*l.* in the Priest who sang, and 100*l.* each for the Hearers: And when a *Priest* is condemned to die by that Statute, which makes it Felony in them who are so ordained beyond Sea to come into *England*, it is not barely on that Account he is to suffer; since, if he will, at the very Gallows, offer to take the Oaths of *Supremacy* and *Allegiance*, he shall be pardon-
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ed, tho' he does not thereby any Way renounce any other *Popish* Doctrines. And that this was not deemed any Violation of what you call the *Catholic Faith*, appears plain, in that this Oath was first contrived, and agreed to, by the *Popish* Bishops in *Henry VIII's* Reign, and which none of them refused to take, except *Fisher* Bishop of *Rochester*, who lost his Head for denying he could do it with a safe Conscience.

P. I confess you have informed me in these Matters more than I was apprized of before. But pray tell me, *Sir*, how you can agree with your Church of *England*, which supposes it lawful for the Civil Powers, so long as they profess the Religion established by Law, to suppress all *Heresy* and *Schism* by temporal Punishments, even that of Death it self? I have heard that, 'till towards the Close of *Charles II's* Reign, the Laws for burning *obstinate Heretics* continued in Force; by Virtue of which, several *Arians* and *Anabaptists* were burned, during the Reigns of *Edward VI*, *Queen Elizabeth*, and *James I*. And, as for the *Dissenters* from the Church of *England*, they only are tolerated at present by the Suspension of the penal Laws made against them, by an Act passed in

the Beginning of the late King *William's* Reign. Therefore, since these Laws are not formally repealed, it is evident, that the now Civil Powers do still assert their Right in inacting those Laws: For, upon the bare Repeal of that Act of *Toleration*, or rather *Indulgence* (which the same Power which made it may revoke whenever it pleases) all the Laws against them are revived, and maybe put in Execution: So that no one Government in *Europe* asserts this Privilege, of inflicting Penalties on *Dissenters* from the national Religion, established by Law, more than your Kings, and Parliaments here in *England*, have done: And, indeed, if they were of the true *Catholic* Faith, they would rather deserve to be commended, than censured in that Respect; for, beside St. *Austin*, several other *Catholic* Bishops of the Primitive Church, were satisfied with the Reasonableness and Necessity of it, for the Propagation of the *Orthodox* Religion; because it was chiefly owing to the severe Laws made, by the *Eastern* Emperors, against the *Arians*, that their *Heresy* is wholly extirpated in those Parts; upon which Prosecution many of them fled *Westwards*, where they were likewise treated much after the same Manner: And, had those
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Heretics, and the modern *Socinians*, been so dealt with here in *England*, and other *Protestant* Countries, in all Probability, they had not increased to that Degree as they have done of late Years. To conclude, if you go about to condemn this Prerogative of Princes and States, who will suppose themselves to be of the *Orthodox* Faith (let them be of what Religion you will) you condemn the Doctrine of your Church, and the constant Practise of the State in Pursuance of that Doctrine.

R. I acknowledge the Matters of Fact you mention upon *Heretics*, in *England*, to be true: But then I must tell you, that I look upon it as a Relict of *Popery*: For, before the making of that Act against those called *Lollards*, in the Reign of *Henry IV*, there was no Law for putting *Heretics* to Death; and how it came to continue so long in Force after the *Reformation*, I am not able to inform you: Yet of this I am certain, that it was contrary to the *Judgment* of the *Primitive Church*, as I could prove from several Passages of those Fathers, who wrote their Apologies to the *Heathen* Emperors in Defense of the *Christian* Religion; in which they do expressly disclaim, and condemn the Use of any

Compulsion to make Men profess the Religion then established by their Law. And if, when the Emperors became *Christian*, *Constantine* had punished the *Heathens* in like Manner as *Dioclesian*, and *Licinius*, had done the *Christians* not long before, would not the *Heathens* have had abundant Reason to have charged the *Christians* with Hypocrisy, and with doing to others what they exclaimed against when done to themselves?

Let us again suppose, that the said Emperor had in like Manner proceeded against the *Arians*, as those *Heretics* were dealt with here in *England*, would not the succeeding *Arian* Emperors, and *Gothic* Kings in *Spain* and *Africa*, of the same Profession, have had a very good Occasion to justify themselves for all the Cruelties they afterwards exercised upon those of the *Catholic* Religion?

But the Truth is, this cruel Doctrine of slaughtering People for *Heresy*, was not put in Practice 'till the Time of the Usurper *Maximus*; who, at the Instigation of some *Spanish* Bishops, ordered *Priscilian*, a Bishop of the Sect called by his Name, to be put to Death. But this was so far from being approved of by the other Prelates of that Time, that

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St. *Martin* of *Tours*, and several other Bishops of *Gaul* and *Italy*, utterly refused to hold any Communion with those who were the Authors of that Severity, as yet unknown to have been practised by any Sort of *Christians* towards others of the same Denomination.

As for the Authority of St. *Austin*, which you have mentioned more than once, I think, I need but say, that he is the only Writer of that Age, who seems to approve of temporal Penalties to reclaim *Heretics* and *Schismatics*; and to which, perhaps, he might have been moved by the turbulent and seditious Behavior of the *Donatists* towards the *Catholics*, in *Africa*, and especially one Sort of them, called *Circumcellians*, who had very much insulted the *Catholics*, by breaking into their very Houses, and beating and abusing them in a most outrageous Manner. And I cannot deny, but that, when any Sect of Men, on Pretense of Zeal for their Religion, make Use of their *Christian* Liberty for a Cloak to their Malice, they may be justly restrained, and punished for so doing. Nevertheless, whoever will take the same Pains I have done, to peruse that *Epistle* of St. *Austin* to *Vincentius*, he will find, that it no Way answers that

Strength of Argument, with which he writes against the false Opinions of those *Schismatics*: For, to make thereon a few transient Observations; his laying it down as a Rule, *that good Instruction should always, at the same Time, be administered together with the Punishment*, seems to be alike reasonable with putting a Man on the Rack, to make him more attentive to the Force of such Arguments as shall be proposed to him. However, thus much must be alleged in his Behalf; that, tho' he justifies the Exercise of some Penalties against *Heretics* and *Schismatics*, yet, at the same Time, he expressly declares against taking away their Lives, as being wholly inconsistent with the merciful Meekness and Lenity of the Gospel-Dispensation. And as for what you now urge, from the Example of the *Greek Emperors Proceedings* against the *Arians*, and other *Heretics*, I think you cannot shew me any Edict, or Law of theirs, which made the Holding that Opinion to be Penal, except the Party some how openly taught, or asserted it, or at least, frequented their Religious Meetings.

But thus far, I think, I may safely go, and confidently affirm, that, in those Times which you call *primitive*, viz.
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about the End of the Vth, or Begining of the VIth Century, as *Superstition* in the Clergy, and *Ignorance* in the Laity began to increase, so did *Persecution*, or the imposing severe Penalties for *Schism*, and *Heresy*, likewise gradually get Ground with them; and the Clergy then began to have a greater Ascendant over the Consciences of the *Greek* Emperors: The former, finding it easier to destroy the Persons, or ruin the Fortunes of *Heretics*, than to convert them, were never contented, 'till they at Length prevailed upon their Princes to make against them those severe Edicts, which are still extant in the Collections of their Laws. But, in the *Western* Empire, we find little or no Mention of the like Laws, or Edicts, against *Heretics*, 'till the Pope had fully settled his Spiritual Dominion over Mens Consciences; and then it was, that Princes began to make Laws for the *Persecution* of *Heretics*, and, at the *Pontiffs* Instigation condemned them to the Flames; and where they were too many and powerful to be thus dealt with, then he issued out his *Bull*, granting *Indulgences*, and *Pardon* for all Sins to such Princes, and others, as would make War upon them, in order to subdue and extirpate them, in the same Manner as they

they had done in their *holy Wars* against the *Saracens*, in *Palestine*: And by such *pious Means* were the *Albigenses*, and *Waldenses*, utterly destroyed by the Count of *Tholouse*, and those of his Opinion, in the Beginning of the XIIIth Century. Yet, in the Interim, with Regard to *Schism*, it was then so frequent among those called *Catholics*, about the Election, and acknowledging of Popes, two and even three at a Time, that they were contented with the bare *Excommunication* of each other: Nor do I, indeed, find that the *Christian Potentates* of those Days, ever punished their Subjects with any corporal, or pecuniary Penalties, for owning a *Head* of the *Church* different from him who was acknowledged for true *Pope* by the Civil Powers of those Countries. So, having given you a brief History of the Beginning and Progress of *Persecution*, I shall conclude this Subject.

P. Well, Sir, tho' I have little to object against the Matters of Fact, as you have related them; yet, I must however tell you, that, according to your own Confession, there have been severe Laws made in *England*, not only against the *Roman-Catholics*, but *Protestant Dissenters* of all Kinds, approved of by the

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Bishops

Bishops and Clergy of your Church; and which, with Respect to the *Protestant Dissenters*, are only suspended by that which you stile the *Toleration-Act*, in the passing whereof (as I have heard) the Clergy had no Hand, but a great Majority of the Bishops voted against it; and, I believe, most of them would be very well pleased, if those Laws were revived and put in Force afresh. Therefore, if you argue against the inacting such Penalties upon *Heretics* and *Schismatics*, you do not only condemn these Proceedings of the Civil Powers, as severe and unjust, but you also arraign the Prelates, and other Clergy of your own Church, at whose Desire, at least, if not Instigation, most of those Laws were (or I am misinformed) at first made; and who would likewise, if permitted, actually *excommunicate*, as *Schismatics* from the national Church, all those who differ from the received Way of Worship; which I have shewn they have, in the Main, done already. Now, if these are *Schismatics*, you ought to look upon them as without the Pale of your Church; and consequently all who die out of her Communion to be *certainly damned*: And then you may, as much as you please, censure the Church of Rome for

for Want of Charity towards those of your Church; for, if you hold to her Principles, you must have the same Opinion of all who die out of her Communion; whether they are *Popish Recusants* (as your Laws stile them) or *Protestant Dissenters* of any of those several Sects which now swarm in *England*: And I should be glad to hear how you will justify your Church as to this Charge, without listing yourself among the *Latitudinarians*, or *Free-Thinkers*, who fancy Men may be saved in any Religion, where *Jesus Christ* is acknowledged to be the *Messiah*.

R. Well, Sir, I will do it as far as I can. *First* then, as for those severe Laws more lately made against all Sorts of *Nonconformists*, I desire you would take Notice, that, while they were in Force, no Man was troubled for his *private Opinion*, provided he came sometimes to Church: For, tho' there was a Penalty of but 12*d.* per Sunday, laid upon *Protestant Dissenters*, and 20*l.* per Month upon *Roman-Catholics* who would not at all come to Church, yet, those Penalties were seldom or never levied; a Favor no where shewed to *Protestants*, of what Denomination soever, under a *Popish* Government; tho' they would be
glad

glad to purchase the free Exercise of their Religion at so easy a Rate, as such a certain pecuniary Mulct, or Payment. So that, in Reality, the severest Law was ever passed against the *Dissenters*, both of Clergy and Laity, was that which forbad their private, or separate Meetings¹; for which likewise not any corporal Punishments, but only certain Mulcts and Fines, were appointed, which grew higher upon the third Offense: And, on that Account, indeed, they might have run up to an indefinite Degree, even to the perpetual Imprisonment of their Persons; as was the Case of very many of the *Quakers*, who, as I have heard, were so obstinate, that they rather chose to be sent to Jail than pay the Fines laid upon them for their bare meeting together. But, that King *Charles II.*, did not willingly comply to the passing this Act, is very evident; since it was not only contrary to his *Declaration* from *Breda*, but also to another he issued out not long after his Return; in which, he promised to use his utmost Indeavours, for the Ease of all such whose Consciences would not permit them to comply with the established

¹ 16 *Charles II.*

Form of Divine Worship. And, indeed, he was so sensible of the Severity of those Laws, that they were not put in Execution for upwards of, I think, three Years after their being inacted; and then, on *London's* dreadful Fire, with the general Decay of Trade which followed, his Majesty thought fit to relax that Severity: And, about the Beginning of the second *Dutch* War, he took upon him, by his Royal Prerogative, to issue his Proclamation of *Indulgence*, or *Toleration*, to all Sorts of *Recusants* and *Dissenters* whatsoever: But the House of Commons, when they met, took Fire at this; not so much for the Thing itself, as for the Manner of doing it; because thereby, his Majesty assumed to Himself an absolute Power to *dispense* with an Act of Parliament; and if they should allow it to one or two Acts, they wisely thought the same Prerogative might be extended farther for *dispensing* with all other Laws, without Exception, and that too for ever, if he so pleased. Therefore, on that Consideration, as also because they saw it was chiefly intended in Favor of the *Roman-Catholics*, the Parliament refused to give the King any Supplies towards that War, 'till he had actually called in that *Declaration*. However, those Laws found

found no Countenance from the Government, 'till towards the Close of his Reign; when, being piqued afresh at the *Dissenters*, for having shewn themselves so zealous against the *Papists*, and particularly for joining with the *Whig-Party* in the House of Commons, about setting aside his Brother, the Duke of *York*, from succeeding to the Crown, he not only caused a Bill (which had passed both Houses) not to make *Protestant Dissenters* liable to the same Laws with *Popish Recusants*, to be clancularly withdrawn by the Clerk of the Crown, who had it ready among other Bills for his Royal Assent: But, so soon as the last *Oxford-Parliament* was dissolved, he issued out a Proclamation, commanding all Laws against both *Popish Recusants*, and other *Dissenters*, to be put in Execution, and so they were for the last four Years of his Reign; but with this Distinction, that the former never paid more than 12*d.* per Sunday for not coming to Church; and the same was likewise exacted from all Sorts of *Protestant Dissenters*; but the Forfeiture of 20*l.* per Month, or the two Thirds of their Estates, upon their absenting, was never demanded of them. Beside, even this Law, or any other of that Kind, could
not

not be executed 'till they were returned into the *Exchequer* as *Recusants Convict*; which few of them ever were; but all the Severities fell upon the *Presbyterians*, and other *Dissenters*, who were no *Papists*. I need not account to you, how the next Declaration of *Indulgence* was granted by King *James*; to be sure, not thro' any Kindness to the *Protestant Dissenters*, or so much to mortify those of the Church of *England* Clergy, as chiefly, indeed, to give the *Papists* intire Liberty for the Exercise of their Religion, and to make them capable of all Sorts of Employments, either Ecclesiastical, Civil, or Military; because you cannot but have heard enough of that since your being in *England*.

Thus, having given you a brief History of the Origin and Progress of these penal Statutes, I come now to shew you the Causes why they were so severely imposed; which I am persuaded was not on a truly Religious Account, but purely in Hatred to the *Presbyterians*, *Independants*, and other *Seċtaries*, from the Old *Cavalier-Party*, who, having been themselves very severely treated by them, as well with Respect to their Consciēces, as Estates, while they were by Turns in Power, both before and after King
Charles's

Charles's barbarous Murder; it was no Wonder they, by Way of Reprisal, resolved to be as severe with them, and to restore the Church to her public Prayers, and ancient Discipline in Government. And, indeed, the *Presbyterians* were so much the less to be pitied, because they had borne so hard upon all those who had refused to take the *Covenant*, and comply with that *Mode* (for I cannot call it *Form*) of public Worship appointed by the *Directory*, which had been prescribed only by an Ordinance of their Parliament. Now, as the severe Laws against the *Popish Recusants*, and *Puritan Dissenters*, in Queen Elizabeth's Reign, were enacted merely upon the Score of their seditious and rebellious Tenets, and Practises; so the same Things were then laid to the Charge of both *Presbyterians* and *Independents*, for having begun and carried on a furious War against the King, under that Parliament's Authority, 'till having utterly subdued his Forces, in several Battles, they finally got his Person into their Custody; and having confined, and detained him a close Prisoner in the *Isle of Wight*, 'till the *Independent* Party, in the House of Commons, supported by a Faction of their own in the Army,

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forcibly took him from them, and most *nefariously* cut off his Head, before the Gates of his own Palace.

And, upon these Considerations it was, that King *Charles II's* Parliament passed those Acts against *Conventicles*, which appears more plainly from the Preambles of the 16th and 17th Years of his Reign: The former of which (after declaring the Statute of 35 *Elizabeth* ^m, chiefly made against the *Puritans*, to be still in Force) proceeds thus: *And also for providing more speedy Remedies against the growing and dangerous Practises of seditious Sectaries, and other disloyal Persons, who, under the Pretense of tender Consciences do, at their Meetings, contrive Insurrections; as late Experience hath shewed: And much the same Cause is assigned for the other, of the 17th, forbidding all Ministers, who had not renounced the Covenant, and who refused to take an Oath, that they believed it unlawful, upon any Pretense whatsoever, to take up Arms against the King, &c. to dwell within five Miles of any Corporation.* Now, whether all those Things, there laid to their Charge, were literally

^m Intituled, *An Act for detaining the Queen's Subjects in their due Obedience.*

true, or not, is not my Business to inquire: Yet, one would have thought the *Presbyterians*, at least, might have merited somewhat more Favor than the other Sects; because, tho' they had unwillingly contributed towards ruining the Father, they had however atoned, in some Measure, for that Offense, by their restoring the Son to his Throne, which could never have been brought about but by their Means and Assistance; no known *Royalist*, or *Cavalier*, being suffered to be chosen for that first *Convention*, which acknowledged his Title, and recalled him home from Banishment. Therefore I may well maintain that, when the Supreme Power shall judge any Party of Men, differing from the present Establishment, to be dangerous to it, by Reason of their pernicious Principles, and former Actions, it may on that Account (and that alone) deny them *Indulgence*, and *Toleration* in the Exercise of their Religious Worship: But then, this is not with Respect to their Persuasions, as relating to Doctrines or Opinions merely *speculative*; but only as they may influence their Actions, to disturb the public Peace and Quiet of the Nation, which their bare professing such Doctrines and Opinions, and wor-

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shipping God according to them, does not of itself any Way affect, so it be managed (as it ought) without any reproachful or uncharitable Censures; because every one ought to have so much Charity, as to believe others desire to be eternally happy hereafter as well as himself.

And therefore it is not true what you affirm, that Civil Peace and Union cannot be upheld among *Christians* of different Persuasions in Religion, under one and the same Government; since those who have been in *Holland* do observe, that all Sorts of *Christians* (nay, even *Jews*) who receive the Protection of the Civil State, do live, trade, and converse with each other without any Party-Feuds or Animosities. But then, this is owing to the Charity and Moderation of the Clergy of those different Sects, who do not (as some here in *England*) denounce *Hell* and *eternal Damnation*, from their Pulpits, against all who are not of the national Religion, or that which the Civil Powers own to be the true Church. Tho' the Truth is, those Powers will not allow any Clergy at all to exceed their due Limits.

P. Very well, *Sir*, so much for this Head. Now, pray let me put you in
Mind

Mind of the Question I lately proposed to you, and which you have not yet thought fit to answer. I mean, Whether (if you are a stanch Church of *England* Man, as you pretend) you do not believe, that all *Schismatics* and *Heretics* are in such a State as you here describe? For if not, it seems a Man may be saved in any Sect, who will but take the Name of *Christian* upon him, be he *Arian*, *Socinian*, or *Quaker*: But, if these are out of a State of Salvation, is it not the Duty of every *Orthodox* Priest, or Minister, openly to declare this to his Congregation, to keep them from falling into those damnable and pernicious Errors?

R. Before I return a direct Answer to your *Query*, give me Leave to put two or three to you: *First*, If you are a *Roman-Catholic* (as you appear to be) are not you, in the *Judgment* of the Church of *England*, declared, in her Articles and Canons, as much a *Schismatic* as any other *Dissenter* from her? *Secondly*, Are you not likewise in the same State of Damnation? And then *Thirdly*, Whether all Priests and Ministers of that Church are not bound, by your own Principles, to declare, that whosoever dies in the Communion of the *Romish* Church

is assuredly damned? Pray tell me how you can satisfy me as to these *Queries*?

P. At your Desire, Sir, I will do it, as far as they concern the *Roman-Catholics*; but for all other Sorts of *Dissenters* among you, let them answer for themselves. To your *first* I say thus: That the Church of *England*, being, by her own Confession, a *fallible* Church, has no Authority to declare all *Roman-Catholics* to be *Schismatics*. To your *second*: They, being the only true *Orthodox*, and most *Primitive* Sort of *Christians*, cannot be guilty of *Schism*, but rather those who impose their unlawful Oaths, and Terms of Communion upon them; and, for that Reason, they have never made any *Schism* from the Church of *England*, but those of that Church have from them. Now, if all this be true (as I am absolutely sure it is) your *Query*, I mean the *second*, is answered, That, since the *Roman-Catholics* are really no *Schismatics*, they may certainly both live and die in a State of Salvation. Beside, all the more learned and moderate Bishops and Divines of your Church do allow ours for a true Church; tho' they say it is corrupted with some Errors, and that we have true *Orders*, and true *Sacraments* (which they will not allow to any other
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Sort of *Dissenters*) and in their Writings they commonly assert, that *Roman-Catholics* may be saved, tho' they continue in that Church, which is, indeed, a Favor we do not allow to those who are not of our own Communion : And therefore, from the Concession of our very Adversaries, it is safer to die a *Roman-Catholic* than a *Protestant*. As to your *third*; that is likewise pretty well answered, because it follows, from what has been said, that your Ministers ought not, in their Pulpits, to denounce Damnation against us *Roman-Catholics*, as they may do against other *Dissenters*, and even against themselves, for the very same Reason : Because their Religion proceeded only from the *private Judgments* of their first *pretended Reformers*, both here in *England*, and other Countries, in their Interpretations of their Canonical Scriptures,

R. I thank you, *Sir*, for your Answers to my *Queries* ; and the Use I shall make of them shall be to shew, that there is not one of them but what may be alleged by other *Dissenters* from our Church, as well as by the *Roman-Catholics*. For, as to your *first*, it is much the same with that which the *Dissenters* use against the Church's *Authority* in im-

posing Ceremonies, and in determining Matters of Faith; both which, taken in the Sense wherein I understand that *Article*, may well enough be subscribed to, provided it be not imposed upon others with Civil Penalties. For, tho' I allow, that the Church of *England* may be *certain*, that she has determined nothing, in her *Articles* and *Canons*, but what is agreeable to the *Word* of *God*, and may refuse Admittance of any into her Clergy who will not subscribe thereto; yet, this is no more than what is practised by all other Churches, both *Po-pish* and *Protestant*, as the Terms of their Communion: But, however, she does not take upon her to *compel* any by Force to come in. And, as for the Civil Powers, let them be supposed ever so *certain*, as to what they believe; yet, in this, they can act but as common, *fallible* Men, not as Magistrates: And they may as well require all Men to subscribe to the Certainty of *Euclid's* Mathematics, under a Penalty, tho' they do not understand that Science (and yet its Principles and Demonstrations are certain) as that they should hold the same Doctrines, and observe the same Rites and Ceremonies, as Parts of the national Religion, established by Laws made for that Purpose, as a
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Condition of their being Members of the Civil Society. So your Answer to my *second Query* is much of a Piece with that of the *Dissenters*, who allege, that they are the true *Primitive Christians*; since their Notion that Bishops and Presbyters are all one Order, not only in the Apostles Time, but long after, agrees with some of the Fathers, as also Schoolmen: So likewise, as to the Ceremonies of *Kneeling* at the *Communion*, and using the *Cross* in *Baptism*, they say, that neither of these are to be found in Scripture; and consequently, not being *Primitive Practices*, ought not to be enjoined: And that, in this, as well as other Matters, since the Church imposes unlawful Oaths and Subscriptions upon them, they have just Reason to refuse them. Now, if these Allegations be true, the same Consequence will follow, that they, being Members of *Christ's* true Church, tho' not of that of *England*, as it is established by Law, are nevertheless in a State of Salvation; and those who die in their Communion, if they have lived according to *Christ's* Precepts, will certainly be saved. And, whereas you *Roman-Catholics* deny, that you have ever made any *Schism* from the Church of *England*, but, on the contrary, that Church has
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from you : So the *Presbyterians*, in their Defense, affirm, that they are no more guilty of *Schism* than those of the Church of *England*, who separated from that of *Rome*, upon the Account of her imposing, not only false Doctrines, but many indecent, unnecessary and burdensome Rites and Ceremonies : And the *Dissenters*, supposing these which are still left in our Church to be much of the same Nature, do therefore refuse to comply with them. Nor will what you add farther, for proving the *Certainty* of Salvation in the Church of *Rome*, from the Concessions of some of our Bishops and Divines (to whom you vouchsafe the Epithets of *more learned*, and *moderate*) do you any more Service ; since both those who allow your Church to be in some Sense a true one, and those who deny it, do not believe Salvation is to be any farther obtained in her, than as she believes all the fundamental Articles of the *Christian* Faith, as contained in our *Creeds* ; and that also Baptism is rightly administered, tho' clogged with divers vain and superstitious Ceremonies. So that, if a *Roman-Catholic* can be saved, it is not for his dying so, but for his true believing those necessary Articles above-mentioned, and his leading a holy Life according

cording to *Christ's* Precepts. Now, pray
 tell me, why I may not entertain the like
 charitable Opinion of any Sort of *Dif-*
senters, who own the same *Creeds*, and
 endeavor to lead their Lives piously, ac-
 cording to the Rules and Precepts of the
 Gospel? For, if God (as I firmly be-
 lieve) will not condemn to eternal Tor-
 ments, for their Unbelief, even those
Heathens, to whom *Jesus Christ* has
 never been revealed and preached; so I
 believe, He will have much greater
 Mercy on those who, being baptized
 in his Name, had the Misfortune to be
 educated in *Popish* Countries, and conse-
 quently must lie under invincible Igno-
 rance of a *purser*, and more *primitive* Re-
 ligion, as it is professed among us in
England, as well as other Nations. And,
 for those *Papists* and *Dissenters*, who are
 under a clearer Dispensation, and may,
 if they please, be better instructed, I can-
 not in Charity pronounce any one of
 them *damned* for not coming into our
 Church, and being converted; because
 I cannot tell how far that Ignorance, as
 to them, may be accounted *invincible*,
 from the strong Prejudices of Education,
 and, perhaps, from such inward Inclina-
 tion, proceeding from natural Consti-
 tution, that they cannot be capable
 Judges

Judges of the Arguments and Authorities urged from Scripture, the Judgment and Practise of the *primitive* Church, and the Principles of right Reason against their Tenets and Opinions. And, that there is such a natural *Crafsis*, or Constitution of Mind, proper to receive, and to be moved with some Arguments, which may to others not seem to carry with them any great Weight, I may instance in two Brothers, named *Reynolds*, who lived about a hundred Years since, and had the Fortune to be bred up in different Countries, and in different Religions. The Elder became a *Jesuit* in *Flanders*, while the other was bred a *Protestant* at *Oxford*. The *Jesuit*, being sent over into *England*, in *Queen Elizabeth's* Reign, visited his Brother; and, falling into Discourse concerning the Truth of their different Religions (after several Days amicable Conference) the Result was, that they both shifted Sides; the *Jesuit* turned the *Protestant* to be a *Roman-Catholic*; and the other's Arguments converted the *Jesuit* to the Church of *England*; in which he continued; and was afterwards Head of a College in *Oxon*, to the Day of his Deathⁿ.

ⁿ *Vid.* Fuller's *Church-History*.

P. If this Hypothesis of yours be true, it seems to lead Men to mere *Scepticism*, and *Uncertainty* in the main Principles of *Christianity*; since, by your Notion, two Men may both act according to their Consciences, and so might both be excused before God, tho' they each changed their Religions; of which only one of them could make a right Choice; so, at this Rate, any Man might be left at Liberty to change his Religion, when he judged he had Reason for so doing, and not be accountable either to God or Man for such Procedure.

R. You mistake me, *Sir*, if you suppose this to be my Meaning, in what I have advanced. But I would advise Men to judge charitably of those who differ from them; because, tho' you and I may be at present certain of the Truth of the Religion we each profess, yet it does not follow to be as certain, that we shall always continue in the same Mind: And, if we should happen to change, neither of us ought to pronounce the other immediately in a State of Damnation; because we cannot judge whether each of us did not act to the best of his Knowledge: And, since the Will necessarily follows the last Result of the Judgment and Understanding, a Man cannot,

in that Case, avoid changing his Religion; for which ill Use of his Reason, how far he may be culpable, none but God can judge. But thus much, I think, I may safely affirm; that, according to the best Ideas I can frame of the Almighty's *Divine Attributes*, He will rather have Mercy on a Man who changes a true Religion for a false one, upon those Reasons he thought to be strongest and most convincing, than He will shew it to another, who believes the true Religion for no other Reasons, but because he has been bred up in it, or else has turned to it upon very slight, or evil Motives, as that it was for his worldly Interest, and he could advance his Fortune in that, better than in any other Religion.

P. I am not of your Opinion, as to what you have now urged: For I believe that, provided a Man is a Member of the true *Catholic* Church, by a sincere, *implicit* Belief of all she teaches, tho' he can give no other Reason but that for his being in the Right; nay, if one should originally turn *Catholic* for Interest, or Ambition, yet if, afterwards, he should come to believe it upon better Grounds, as the Necessity of the *Infallibility* of the Church, his Faith will, I say,

be acceptable to God. But, indeed, if he should never believe at all, but continue a mere Hypocrite, tho' I do not suppose God would look upon him as a true Member of the *Catholic* Church, and consequently not to be in a State of Salvation, I think however he would not be so bad as a declared *Heretic*, or *Schismatic*; because, so long as he continued such outward and visible Member of it, he did not give to others any evil Example and Offense, as *Heretics* and *Schismatics* must needs do, by their Breach of that *Catholic* Unity in Belief, which the Church chiefly requires from all her Members.

R. I shall not any farther dispute this Point with you; for it would be to no Purpose, since your Ideas of God's Attributes of Justice and Mercy are so different from mine, as I find them laid down in the only Rule of my Faith, the *Bible*; and, I am sure, throughout that Book, I cannot find this *implicit* Belief of *Infallibility* in any Man, or Number of Men, without any other Reason for it; but the direct Contrary, by St. Paul's Precept, *try all Things (i. e. all Doctrines) and hold fast that which is good*,

i. e. the Truth; of which the Person's *private Judgment* must determine, or the Precept had been given in vain. To the same Purpose, St. *John* commands us, *not to believe every Spirit (i. e. every one who pretends to Divine Inspiration) but try the Spirits, whether they are of God*^p. Here the Man himself is bid to try those Spirits, and not the Priests, or Ministers, in his Stead. So likewise St. *Peter*, after he has commanded Men to *sanctify God in their Hearts*, adds, *and be ready always to give an Answer to every Man, who asketh a Reason of the Hope which is in you, with Meekness and Fear*^q. But, how *implicit* Belief in the *Infallibility* of a Church can be taken by any rational Man for a sufficient Reason for this Hope, I cannot any how comprehend: For (as I have told you before) he must either take that upon Trust, because his Priest, or Confessor tells him so, or he must believe it upon some other Grounds: If you hold the former, those of all other Churches (as the *Greek*, for Example) who differ from the Church of *Rome*, and yet depend upon the true Faith of their Priests, may as well make the same Plea for their *implicit* Faith in their

^p *John* iv. 1.^q *I Pet.* iii. 15.

Church, as the *Roman-Catholics* can for theirs. But if the Person, upon second Thoughts, examines the Reasons for the Necessity of such *infallible* Judge to maintain your Church's *Unity*, I have already proved that, these being Arguments not to be drawn from *Scripture*, but from Reason or Tradition, he must necessarily recur to his own *private Judgment*, why he should believe it to be so; especially in that very material Point, so much canvassed at this Time in *France*, whether the *Pope's Decisions*, of any Controversy in Religion, be as valid without, as in a General-Council.

But you do well to make this Exception, with Respect to those, who have changed their Religion for mere temporal Advantages; whom, tho' you own they did ill at first, yet, after they had received better Satisfaction, upon the Grounds you lay down, you imagine their Faith becomes acceptable: But then, supposing they had acted thus, I must still maintain, that they could never come to this Belief upon any surer Grounds than their own *private Judgments*, whereby they were convinced of the Necessity of this *Infallibility*. This I fancy you have mentioned to save the Credits of a great Number of your

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Clergy

Clergy and Laity in *France* (many of the Persons of the first Rank) who were strongly suspected to have turned from the *Protestant* Religion to yours on no higher Considerations, than either obtaining those gainful Offices and Preferments, which were offered them on that Score, or else (as of later Times) even to keep those they had already ; being threatened with the Loss of not only them, but also of their own private Estates and Patrimonies, except they would subscribe to the *Trentine Creed*, pursuant to the King's Edicts.

As for your last Assertion, that a complying *Hypocrite* (tho', perhaps, a mere *Deist*, or *Atheist*) if he keep in the Communion of that you call the *true Church* (and yet you own he cannot be in a State of Salvation) is still better than a sincere *Heretic*, or *Schismatic*, I cannot, by any Means, acquiesce with you in it : And tho', perhaps, he may not be so bad in your Opinion, because he seems to maintain the *Unity* of your Church upon any Terms ; yet, I must still judge the *Heretic*, or *Schismatic*, to be much the honestest Man, provided he did not invent those Opinions, nor imbrace them thro' Pride, or Singularity ; unless we can believe God better satisfied, that Men should
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be *orthodox Knaves*, by professing a Religion which they did not at all believe to be true, than with Men naturally of weak Judgments and Understandings; who, either by reading, or conversing, should sincerely believe, and consequently profess a Religion, or Way of Worship, different from that of the Supreme Powers of the Country wherein they were born; and which (as I have proved already) could never be invested, by the Almighty, with any Authority to force Men, by Penalties, or allure them, by such Rewards, on Condition they change their Religion whenever they shall require it, tho' ever so much against their Consciences. Nor will it solve this Difficulty to say (with some of our Church-Divines) that the Civil Powers are only to be obeyed, when they command Things not directly inhibited by the Word of God: For then every Man in *France* ought to believe *Transubstantiation*; for that is so far from being directly contrary to God's Word, that you *Roman-Catholics* found the Belief of it upon the literal Sense of *Christ's* Words, *this is my Body*. But what confounds this whole Exception is, that, if the Laity cannot understand the Scripture but in the Sense of the governing Church,

then she can never be supposed to have ordained any Thing contrary to the Word of God ; because she will always maintain her own Interpretation of any Scripture-Text to be right, tho' ever so repugnant to the true Sense and Meaning thereof, as you may observe in your *Popish* Commentators upon that Chapter of St. Paul's Epistle to the *Corinthians*, against *praying in an unknown Tongue* : But if, on the other Side, the Subjects, who are to obey, are to judge for themselves, what Religion, or what Rites either are, or are not, contrary to the Canonical Scriptures, then all these Arguments for Submission to Civil Laws must signify nothing : For, if the Subject who is to obey, may judge such a Canon or Article imposed by Law to be believed or practised under such a Penalty, to be contrary to God's Word, he ought not to obey it : Tho' it may be he is in the Wrong ; since God judges Men by the Sincerity of their Hearts, and not by their outward Actions : For, whatsoever *is not of Faith* (*i. e.* what is done with an unsatisfied Conscience) *is Sin* ; as the Apostle has determined in the Case of him who doubted, whether he might

^r 1 Cor. xiv.

^f Rom. xiv. 23.

eat certain Sorts of Meat, tho' in itself lawful to be eaten, but prohibited by the *Mosaical* Law.

P. I cannot depart from my first Opinion, that, since there is but one *infallible* Church, all Men ought to submit to her Doctrines and Traditions, without considering whether they are agreeable to his human Reason or not ; but ought rather to believe her, even in Things which seem directly contrary to their Senses, and Reason too ; as I confess we do in understanding those Words, *this is my Body*, according to the Letter. And, therefore, it was piously said of one of the Fathers, concerning this, as well as some other Mysteries in Christianity, *Credo, quia impossibile; I believe it, because it is impossible*; that is, with Respect to Men, tho' not in Respect to God, with whom all Things are possible : And therefore, as I have said already, and think it necessary here to repeat it, That, as no Church, but that of *Rome*, can pretend to *Infalibility*; so no Civil Powers, but those whose *Faith* is founded upon *implicit* Submission to all her Dictates, can claim any Right to compel Men by Penalties to consider them.

And therefore, I think, you have well enough expressed the Absurdity of the

Tenets of those Divines of your Church ; who, since they grant her to be *fallible*, do suppose it possible for her to injoin some Things contrary to the *Catholic Faith*, or the true Sense of Scripture : For, if that be once admitted, I cannot see how they can hinder the Laity, into whose Hands they have put the Translation of them, from interpreting them as every one shall think fit ; except, at the same Time, and by the same Authority, they had likewise set out a genuine, authentic Comment, upon all difficult and doubtful Passages in what Sense they only ought to be understood. But they are so far from doing that, that I could name three or four *English* Commentators on the *Bible*, who differ considerably from each other's Interpretation of *St. Paul's Epistles*, viz. as to *Predestination*, *sufficient Grace*, *Free-Will*, the *Impossibility of the Elects ever totally falling away*, with divers other very material Points : And if you will peruse their Interpretation of the *Revelations*, your *Puritan* Commentators make the *Scarlet-Whore* to be the *Popedom*, and the *Beast* on which she rides to be *Rome*, and consequently that the *Pope* is *Anti-Christ* ; of the Falseness and Absurdity of which Interpretations, *Dr. Hammond*, and the more learned

learned and moderate Divines of your Church, being convinced, have exploded them, and given those Places quite another Turn. But that which is one of the greatest Differences between those of the Church of *England*, and all other foreign Churches, both *Lutherans* and *Calvinists*, is, in what Sense the Words *Bishop* and *Presbyter* are to be understood, in all those Places of the *Acts*, and *St. Paul's Epistles*, where they are mentioned. Such of your Church as assert *Episcopacy* to be *Jure Divino*, understand them in the same Sense with several of the Fathers, that those called Bishops and Presbyters, promiscuously by the same Titles, were really the Successors of the Apostles, and to be submitted to and obeyed as their Successors, as to those distinguishing Functions of *Ordination*, and *Excommunication*; whereas they who stile themselves *Protestants*, in all Countries but *England*, do understand the Word *Bishop* to import no distinct Character, or different Order from that of *Presbyter*, but only a different Degree in the same Order. And therefore, since your Church does own no absolute *infallible* Interpreter of the Scriptures, as those of the Church of *Rome* have done, to whose Sense of them

all Men are to submit, under Pain of Damnation, it is not at all to be wondered at, that you should have among you so many different Sects; which we have wisely avoided by forbidding the Laity so much as to read any Translation of the *Bible* into *English*, or *French*, tho' made by those of the *Romish* Church, unless it be some of the better and more inquisitive Sort of Men, who have obtained Leave from their Confessors so to do, and to whom they are to recur for the Church's Sense of any Text which seems to make against some Doctrine, or Tradition, received by the *Catholic* Church.

R. I own this *Infallibility* in your Church, provided it could be sufficiently made out, either from Scripture, Reason, or the universal Tradition, or Testimony of all other Churches, might give yours a greater Authority over Mens Consciences, than what ours can pretend to. Nevertheless, I still deny that this *Infallibility* would give the Civil Powers, which depend on her, any Authority to inflict Penalties on those who would not voluntarily believe it: For, since Conscience cannot be forced, and the Proofs, brought by the Divines and Writers of your Church, are no Demonstrations,
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but only moral Arguments drawn from the supposed Necessity of an *infallible* Judge, no Civil Powers whatsoever ought, upon this Supposition of the *Infallibility* of their Spiritual Guides, to impose the Belief of it upon Mens Consciences by Force: For such a Belief, without intire Conviction, can never be acceptable before God, who requires the Sincerity, and *hidden Man* of the Heart, as well as the Declaration of the Tongue, or any outward Posture of the Body. And therefore, the Apostle has expressly joined them both together, as necessary to Salvation: *If thou shalt confess with thy Mouth the LORD JESUS, and shalt believe in thine Heart that God hath raised him from the Dead, thou shalt be saved*. And, tho' this Faith, or Believing, is here put after confessing with the Mouth; yet, that it was the Ground and Principle of this, appears by the following Verse: *For with the Heart Man believeth unto Righteousness (i. e. Justification) and with the Mouth Confession is made (viz. of that Faith) unto Salvation.*

And therefore, if the supposed *Infal-*
libility of your Church cannot give her

any Right to impose the Belief of it upon those who do not believe it, much less can the Magistrate's Reliance on that *Infallibility* give them a Power to impose the Belief of that, or any such *speculative* Doctrines, by Civil Penalties; for, being themselves *fallible*, this imagined *Certainty* of Belief can give them no more Right over the Faith of others, than if they were mere private Men, who have a like Right to judge, whether the Thing enjoined to be believed, or done, is agreeable to the *Scriptures*, or not. So that, as to those Civil Powers, the Apostle's Precept does as much belong to them, as to private *Christians*, concerning Things doubtful: *Hast thou Faith, have it to thy self*^u (*i. e.*) do not impose thy *private Belief* upon others, who were not alike satisfied of its Truth. Not that I am so unreasonable neither, as to fall into the Absurdity of some of our *English* Sectaries, who would have nothing either to be believed, or practised among *Christians*, but what is expressly revealed, or commanded in *Scripture*: For if so, I know not how the Baptism of Infants, and the Alteration of the seventh, to the first Day of the Week,

^u *Romans* xiv. 22,

as the only Time appointed for God's public Service, can be proved from *Scripture*; and therefore, in those Matters, as well as in several others, I think the universal Tradition, and Usage of all *Christian Churches* may be observed.

But, as to the *private* Interpretation of *Scripture*, which you so much find Fault with in our Church, I own it may be, and is often abused by ignorant and fanatical Sectaries; but then their Abuse of this *Christian Liberty* ought not to take away the Right of others, who use it with due Modesty and Discretion: For that would be to act like *Mahomet*, who forbade the Use of Wine to all his Profelytes, lest they should inebriate themselves with drinking it to Excess. On this Account, we find *St. Peter*, when he had mentioned some Passages in *St. Paul's Epistles*, as speaking to the same Purpose, yet, *having some Things hard to be understood, which they who are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own Destruction* ^w, he does not restrain those converted *Jews*, to whom he writes, from reading them, but only warns them

^w 2 *Peter* ii. 16.

to beware, lest, being also led away with the Error of the wicked (i. e. those Scoffers before-mentioned) they fall from their own Stedfastness.

Therefore, I think, Mens *private* Interpretations of *Scripture* may very well be allowed, always provided it be retained within those due Bounds, which all prudent and pious Men do think it their Duty to observe, according to those Rules which the best and most learned Casuists, and Divines, have agreed on; keeping a Mean between the two Extremes; neither wresting any Text of *Scripture* from its true literal Sense (where it can be no otherwise understood) by over-nice and critical Comments, as the *Socinians* do in their Writings, only because they suppose that, otherwise, the *Gospel-Mysteries* cannot agree with their particular Notions, which they will have to be their only Guide; nor yet so tying up ourselves to the plain literal Sense, where it is against Reason, common Sense, and the Judgment of the *primitive* Fathers; as in the Interpretation of those Words by you cited, *this is my Body*; which, why you should think yourselves bound to understand in that strict Sense, more than any other Place of *Scripture*, where *Christ* calls

calls himself the *true Vine*, and the *Door of the Sheep*, I cannot understand; but only because you erroneously suppose, that this Interpretation is most agreeable to the general Tradition of the *Catholic Church*, which you affirm, and we *Protestants* do as much deny, to have been so.

I grant, indeed, that our Church has not taken upon her to appoint any one general Comment upon the *Scriptures*, as necessary to be received, and no other; neither do I know any such to have been set forth and imposed, by your Church, to be believed as a *Rule of Faith*: And your *Popes* have acted very cunningly as to that; for then their Authority of interpreting any doubtful Text of *Scripture* would be of no Use, had it been already determined by any such Comments. And even such of your own Commentators as are allowed to be read, as being approved of for *Orthodox*, do often differ in their Interpretation of several obscure and doubtful *Texts* of *Scripture*, as I could shew you in divers Instances, if you questioned it: And I can see no Reason why our *Protestant* Commentators may not be allowed the like Liberty. For, as to all Texts, whereon depends any fundamental Point
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of Faith, I think they are so clear, that even illiterate Persons may understand them near as well as the most learned Doctors and Critics. Not but that I allow the Knowledge of the *Hebrew* and *Greek* Tongues, and particularly that of the *Stile*, both of the *Old* and *New Testament*, used by the ancient *Jews* of *Jerusalem* and *Alexandria*, to be very useful; to which may be added some Knowledge in the Writings, and Paraphrases of the ancient *Jewish* Rabbins, especially those, who (not long before, or some short Time after the Death of *Jesus Christ*) wrote their Comments upon the Law and the Prophets: And, tho' several learned Commentators of the *Romish*, as well as *Protestant* Churches, have composed many Volumes of critical Notes, and judicious Interpretations, upon several difficult and obscure Places of both *Testaments*, yet I know not of any, in the whole Number, which can be relied on as *absolute*, *infallible* Interpreters, and whose Sense Men are obliged to follow, any farther than as it agrees with the general Doctrines of the *Gospel*, and the Rules, not only of Criticism, but also of right Reason, whereof every private Reader has a Liberty to judge, since *Jesus Christ* has left us no such Interpreters

terpreters of *Scripture*, on whom all *Orthodox Christians* are bound to rely.

And, if we should be obliged to consult the *primitive* Fathers, and to take their *Interpretations* of *Scripture* for *absolute* and *infallible*, I would then ask you, whether we are to rely upon any one of them above all the others; or whether we are to take them completely, and altogether, for the first five or six Centuries after *Christ*? Now, I suppose, you will not pin your Faith upon any single Father's Interpretation of any Place of *Scripture*; for, how right soever he may have been in hitting on the true Sense of one, or more obscure Texts, yet, seeing you may evidently find him mistaken in divers others, you have no Reason to trust absolutely to his Authority. And, if you will take no Interpretation for true, but such as all these Fathers have been unanimously agreed in, I doubt you will find no such universal Consent, except it be in those which confirm some fundamental Points of Faith, or plain Rules of Practice: For, in other Matters of less Moment, they have differed from each other, as much as our more modern Commentators themselves. So that, when all is said and done, I can see no Reason to depart
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from this one *Orthodox Protestant* Doctrine, That, as the *Bible* is the only *Rule* of *Faith* and *Practise*, so it is every Man's Right to interpret it the best he can for himself, according to the Rules already laid down; and whatever he doubts of, or cannot comprehend, he may be satisfied was never intended by the Almighty for a certain Rule, either of his Belief or Actions. v

But, as for those Texts which, if literally understood, seem contrary both to the Goodness and Mercy of God; and the common Sense and Reason of Mankind, such as are those of *plucking out the Right Eye*, and *cutting off the Right Hand*, if they offend us ^x; and of Mens *making themselves Eunuchs* for the *Kingdom of Heaven's Sake* ^y; surely there needs no more than the Reasons above-mentioned, why we *Christians* should not understand those Precepts in a Literal, but Allegorical, or Figurative Sense. And, tho' I own that some well-meaning, pious Men have understood them in that strict Sense, as did *Origen*, when, in his Youth, he castrated himself to avoid all Temptations to Lust; yet, he was not only much blamed for it, by all his Con-

^x *Matt.* v. 29, 30.

^y *Id.* xix. 12.

temporaries,

temporaries, but he himself would not justify that Action when he became older, and wiser.

And yet, if he had chanced to have died upon that Operation, I cannot be of Opinion that God would have punished him as a Suicide, or Self-murderer ; because what he then did, was thro' a real, tho' mistaken Desire to obey *Christ's* Commands, as far as he was able.

But, as to the remaining Part of your Discourse, concerning the Difference of our *Protestant* Commentators relating to those other Points you mention ; seeing most of them are very abstruse and doubtful, and that their Sense is not any where so expressly determined, in the whole *New Testament*, but that they may admit of various Senses, according as those who are under the Titles of *Calvinists*, and *Arminians*, have thought most agreeable to the Apostle's Intent to interpret them.

Nor is this Variety of Opinions, about these doctrinal Points, only to be found in our *Protestant* Churches, but also in yours at this Day, under the Names of *Jesuits* and *Jansenists* : And the like may be seen among the *modern Divines*, as well as the Fathers. St. *Austin*, and

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some others of the *Latin* Fathers, understand *St. Paul* in a strict literal Sense, concerning absolute *Predestination* and *Election*; whereas the more ancient *Greek* Fathers, as *St. Chrysostom*, for Example, come nearer the Opinion of the present *Arminians* in those Points: And therefore, our Church has acted with great Prudence, in the so cautiously wording the *XVIIth Article*, concerning these Points, that those of both Opinions, taking it in their own Sense, may, with a safe Conscience, subscribe to it; whereas, if they had wholly tied themselves up to the *Calvinian* System, they might have raised, in our Church, such a *Schism*, as was about a hundred Years since, in *Holland*, between the *Remonstrants* and *Anti-Remonstrants*: The former, on that Account, separating from the latter, in their Acts of Religious Worship; and they, to be even with them, excluded them from all Functions and Offices, Ecclesiastical and Civil; by which their Church, and Commonwealth, are deprived of the Service of a very considerable Number of learned and able Men; who, otherwise, are highly capable of all public Offices and Employments.

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With Regard to your other Instance, concerning the Interpretation of those Places of *St. Paul's Epistle to the Thessalonians*, and the *Apocalypse*, whereby some of our Commentators would prove the *Pope* to be the *Anti-Christ*, and *Rome* to be the *Seat* of his *Power*, this is no new Interpretation of those Passages; because the general Apostacy of the *Romish Church* was broached long before the *Reformation* carried on by *Luther* and *Calvin*, and others since, for some Ages. One *Joachim*, an *Italian Abbot*, maintained the same Opinion, when he had observed the horrid Vices and Corruptions of the then *Popes*, in Manners, Doctrines and Discipline, during the *XIth Century* wherein he lived. And the like Opinion was also held, much about the same Time, by the *Albigenses* and *Waldenses*, in *France* and *Italy*: So that this Doctrine is abundantly more ancient than the *Reformation*. Nor was that Interpretation of *St. Paul's Epistle to the Thessalonians*, and those in the *Revelations* begun, but only farther improved, and more clearly applied, by those *Protestant Divines*, who have written Comments upon those Writings: And, if they have been mistaken, it was not in any fundamental, or necessary

Article of Faith, but only maintained as a *probable Opinion* ; for which, those of your Church have no Reason to upbraid ours: Since the *Doctrine* of the *Virgin Mary's immaculate Conception* is believed, by the greater Part of those of your Communion, not as a necessary *Article of Faith*, but as a *pious* (yet only *probable*) *Opinion* which the *Pope* has not thought fit to determine : Yet, he rather encourages that Party who support it ; however without any Authority from Scripture, Reason, or the Testimony of the Fathers. But, as for those more modern Commentators, such as *Grotius* and *Dr. Hammond*, tho' they endeavor to prove, that not the *present* but *Heathen Rome*, under the *Roman* Emperors, was that *Anti-Christ* foretold and described by those inspired Writers, and that most Part of the *Revelations* were fulfilled upon the Destruction of *Rome* by the *Goths* : Yet, whoever will carefully read and consider those Passages, they may have sufficient Reason to think, that those learned Persons have been mistaken ; because there are far stronger and better Reasons brought to prove, that the persecuting *Roman* Emperors were not *Anti-Christ* : But, it rather seems to have been the

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Sense of those inspired Penmen^z, that *Anti-Christ* was not to come till the *Roman* Empire should be taken out of the Way; that is, quite gone and dissolved upon the Extinction of that Title under *Augustulus*, the last *Roman* Emperor. I therefore shall not concern myself about the different Interpretations of those obscure Prophecies, which none will ever be able to understand 'till they are fulfilled: For which Reason, as I do not absolutely maintain, that the *Romish Papacy* is the *Anti-Christ*, foretold by these Apostles *St. John* and *St. Paul*; yet, I think, I may safely affirm, by the Description they give of him, that it seems much more probable to be that *Papacy*, than either *Mahomet*, or the present *Turkish* Empire; or that *Constantinople* (as being called *New Rome*) should be the Seat of that Impostor.

And now I come to your last Objection, against several *Protestant* Commentators Interpretation of the Words *Bishop*, and *Presbyter*, as different from those of the present Church of *England*; concerning which, having already told you my Mind pretty largely, I need only add here, that you *Roman-Catholics* have no

* 2 *Thess.* ii. 6, 7.

Reason to blame those Commentators for making no Distinction between *Bishops* and *Presbyters*, as by *Divine Right*, but only what has proceeded from Ecclesiastical Constitution, whether derived from the Apostles, or in the next Century after them, matters not, if it was not enjoined by *Christ* himself. But, as to the particular *Texts of Scripture*, whereby divers of our *English Divines* would prove, that this Distinction of *Bishops* (as a different Order from *Presbyters*) was as early as the Times of the Apostles themselves (tho', perhaps, it may be so) yet, I can see no such convincing Proofs brought from thence, to which those of the contrary Opinion have not given (if not a full) at least a very plausible Answer. But, if the Authority of the first Fathers of the Church be appealed to, we there indeed find their several Titles, and Functions, more particularly described, than in the *New Testament*: However, several of those Fathers do differ in their Accounts about the Original of *Episcopacy*, whether it was of *Divine Right*, or not.

And next, to tell you freely my Thoughts of this Dispute, which has caused so much Division among *Papists*, as well as *Protestants*; I say that, since I ground my
Faith

Faith absolutely upon the *Sacred Scriptures*, and not upon the mere Authority of Synods, or Councils, much less of any Set of Bishops or Clergy, I therefore absolutely conclude, that whatever is not clearly revealed, or commanded in those Sacred Books, nor can be evidently deduced from thence, no Man is obliged to believe under Pain of Damnation: And, since this Distinction of *Order* between *Bishops*, and *Presbyters*, is no where declared in the *New Testament*, nor enjoined to be believed by the *XXXIX Articles* of the *Church of England*, I do not think, that the particular Opinions of any tho' ever so learned Divines of this Church, can be of sufficient Authority to make that a real Article of Faith without which no true Church can subsist; and seeing it is not contained in any of the *Creeds*, nor in the public *Confessions* of *Faith* of any Churches whatsoever, it can be no *Here-sy* to maintain the contrary Opinion.

P. I shall not now dispute these Points any farther; but, for Matters of Fact, as to those who, so long before *Luther*, have maintained the *Papacy* to be *Anti-Christ*, because I never was apprised of them 'till now, I will not deny but the Whole may be as you have related;

however, I will suspend my Belief 'till farther Inquiry. But pray, *Sir*, answer me one *Query*, which I before put to you; and which, being diverted by other Subjects, you have hitherto forgot to do. It is this, *viz.* Whether every Priest, or Preacher of your Church, is not obliged, in his Sermons, to denounce Damnation to all who dissent from what has been established by Law, provided he be convinced in his Conscience, that this Church is *Orthodox* in all it believes and enjoins?

R. Pray, if you please, first answer me this *Question*, *viz.* Whether *Roman-Catholics*, being as much *Dissenters* from our Church as any others, are not included among those against whom the Preachers of the established Church ought, likewise, to denounce Damnation?

P. I cannot but own that, so long as your Preachers believe their Church to be a true one, and Salvation is not to be obtained out of it, they are, in Conscience, bound to preach that Doctrine: But then (according to your own Rule) this binds no farther than erroneous Consciences can bind. Wherefore, tho' the Doctrine be in the Main true, that no Man can be saved out of the true
Catholic

Catholic Church; yet, it is false when applied to the Church of *England*, as a national Church, which (not being *infallible*) has no Authority to apply it to her self, much less has she any Power over the Consciences of *Catholics*, who never owned her for a Member of the true Church: And, since all Preaching should be for the *Edification* of the Hearers, therefore, because no *Catholics* do (at least, they ought not) come to hear *Protestant* Sermons, it no Way tends to the Hearers Edification to denounce in a State of Damnation all *Catholics* who may not hear what is preached, or, if they did, may not believe it; because they could not be thereby any how convinced, that the Doctrines they hold would be a Hinderance to their Salvation, and consequently, that their Non-Compliance with the Orders of your Church, or with any Acts of the Civil Powers, in Matters touching Religion, and the outward public Worship of God, is a mortal Sin.

R. I am satisfied with your Answer, and also, with the Reasons you give for it, except that of your supposed *Infal-*
libility, which is not yet proved. But then, let me also tell you, if that was a solid and good Argument, then our
Church,

Church, which (instead of your *Infallibility*) asserts herself to be very *certain*, has acted nothing contrary to *Christ's* Commands in whatsoever she has in-joined ; and, upon that Account, would have as much Right to denounce Damnation against all who ought to be of the national Church, if they receive not her Articles, and obey her Canons : But, I have already proved, that this *Certainty* can give the Magistrate no Right to enforce her Laws by Civil Penalties.

But, as for your Argument, that the Church of *England* has no Authority over the Consciences of *Catholics*, who never owned her for a Member of the true Church of *Christ* ; this will also serve all other Sorts of *Dissenters* from the national Church, as well as you, who call yourselves *Catholics* : For, tho' they hold the Church of *England* to be a true Church, as to the fundamental Articles of Faith ; yet, in as much as they say she is corrupt in injoining such Rites and Ceremonies in Religious Worship, which were never appointed by *Christ*, or his *Apostles*, they do not oblige any sincere *Christians*, who do not own her Authority, to ordain such Rites and Ceremonies, and add them to the public Worship of God.

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And, with Regard to your next Reason, since all preaching ought to be for Edification, and therefore denouncing Damnation to all *Catholics* cannot conduce to that End, because they do not (or, at least, ought not to) come to her public Service; that may be as well urged by some other Sorts of *Dissenters*, as by *Roman-Catholics*. For, they think it also unlawful to hear the public Service of the Church, or to acknowledge all her Articles and Canons, and consequently, can be no Way influenced by such Discourses, whereat they are never present, if they can avoid it. So that our Preachers may, for the same Reason, be justified as well in denouncing Damnation against *Roman-Catholics*, as against any other *Dissenters*; for they are all alike guilty of Disobedience, both to the Ecclesiastical and Civil Laws of this Church and Nation: And the same Reason may serve to excuse all other Sorts of *Dissenters* from coming to Church, as well as *Roman-Catholic Recusants*.

P. I grant it would be so, was our Religion founded upon no surer Principles than theirs, which is wholly grounded on their own *private Judgments*, without depending on the Authority of any Church, as an Assembly
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of Bishops and their Clergy. But, on the other Side, if you will not allow Preachers to denounce Damnation to those whom they suppose out of their Church, how shall they shew their Auditors the Hazard they run of their Salvation, if they should quit her Communion? Or, how can they otherwise confirm the Truth of their Doctrines, than by shewing they are absolutely necessary to Salvation?

R. To answer this Objection; I own it, indeed, the Duty of all *Orthodox* Ministers to prove, and confirm the Truth of the Doctrines they teach, both from *Scripture*, *Reason*, and by the *Authority*, or *Example*, of the *Primitive Church*, as often as they shall have Occasion for it. But then you must likewise acknowledge, that they are not obliged to do this constantly: For, at that Rate, they *first* must preach nothing but the controversial Parts of Religion: But, *secondly*, Whenever they see a proper Opportunity to handle such Points, I cannot conceive, that then they are obliged to denounce *eternal Damnation* to all who differ from them; nor yet, to those who should happen voluntarily to quit their Communion. For, if this Course was to be always followed by our Ministers, then
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the *Dissenting* Preachers, excited by this Want of Charity in them, might be somewhat excused, should they return it in the like Manner; by denouncing Damnation to all those who were not of their Congregations; or who should, upon any Dislike of them, take it into their Heads to quit them; which Sort of Preaching would be so far from advancing *Christian* Charity, and mutual Forbearance towards each other, that I know nothing would more tend to create a reciprocal Hatred and Dislike of each other's Persons and Conversation, or so much as dealing with those of a different Persuasion from them: For, what worse Appellation can any Sort of *Christians* give to each other, than to call them *wicked, heretical, damned* Creatures; which are the Epithets which you *Roman-Catholics* bestow upon us *Protestants* on every Occasion, and in all Places, where you can do it with Safety and Impunity?

But, what a strange Disturbance would that cause here among us, to have Neighbors and Acquaintance, of different Persuasions, thus to treat one another at all Meetings; and, for their Justification, to declare, that their Minister, or Preacher, told them so from the Pulpit?

Pulpit? Would not such Conversation as this end in mutual Reviling, and calling each other by reproachful Names, 'till perhaps, at last, it ended in Blows and Bloodshed?

P. Pray, *Sir*, What other Methods would you prescribe, to shew them their Errors, and the Danger which attends them, as to their *eternal Salvation*, if they continue in their *Hereſy*, or *Schiſm*?

R. I perceive by this, tho' you may be a Priest of the Church of *Rome*, you are none of her Missionaries, sent over to *pervert* People from the established Church: For, if you was, you might easily have known, that it is not by Preaching, but by private Conversation, and Books written for your Religion, which they offer to those whom they would make Converts to their Creed; and then it is they in private take Occasion to tell them of the great Hazard they run, if they continue any longer in the Communion of a *heretical* Church; and this they know how to urge with all the plausible Persuasions they are Masters of. The like course I would prescribe to all Priests and Ministers of the Church of *England*, who happen to have *Popish Recusants*, or other *Dissenters* in their Parishes,

Parishes, as being most suitable to the Canon I have already mentioned, concerning the Conversion of *Roman-Catholics*: And, if our Ministers would take this more *Christian* and *charitable* Course of dealing with them, by Way of fraternal Admonition and Concern for their Souls, I believe it would prove more effectual, and be a much better Token of their Pastoral Care over their respective Flocks, than by preaching Damnation from their Pulpits, accompanied with scandalous personal Reflections, railing at, and reviling their Principles, with the utmost Virulence and Calumny: Since, instead of doing any Good by these Methods, and making them Converts, and bringing them over to their Church, I have, in that little Time I have been in *England*, observed, that this Way has given them such a Dislike, or rather Aversion to the Preacher, that they have gone out of the Church with a Resolution never to hear him more: Whereas, had they imitated *St. Paul*, in using the honest Subtilty of *Moderation*, and bearing with the Weaknesses and Infirmities of their Brethren, they might, by Degrees, have so gained upon their good Wills and Affections, as to have inclined them to hearken to the
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Arguments and Persuasions, which had been administered in private Conversation : And then it would have been soon enough to have shewn them, that it was their Duty to obey the Civil Powers in all lawful Commands, relating to Things which they themselves own to be indifferent ; and, to prove that the *Rites* and *Ceremonies* so enjoined, are no *essential* Part of God's Worship, but only certain Circumstances added to it for greater Decency and Order ; and then to demonstrate to them, that a wilful and obstinate Disobedience to those Injunctions, when thus convinced of their Indifferency, may render them liable to eternal Damnation, according to St. Paul's Precept : *Let every Soul be subject to the higher Powers, &c. And, that not only for Wrath, but Conscience Sake :* And afterwards, when these Difficulties were once removed, then to discourse them concerning the Lawfulness, Antiquity, and other Advantages of *Episcopal* Government, without a rigorous requiring them to believe it as ordained by *Christ* himself ; which, except it could be fully proved, it is impossible to make it appear to be of such *Divine Right*, as that no Church can ever be constituted without it.

But, I do not much expect to see this *primitive* Method take Place, so long as our Preachers find it easier to bring railing Accusations against those who differ from them, and to stir up the Civil Magistrates, by their *wholsome Severities*, to force them into the Church, without ever convincing their Consciences, that they may lawfully come thither, than it is to observe the Rules of the Apostle to *Timothy*: *And the Servant of the Lord must not strive (i. e.) must not contend with Gain-sayers by reviling, or reproachful Language) but be gentle unto all Men, apt to teach, patient, in Meekness instructing those who oppose themselves; if God, peradventure, will give them Repentance to the acknowledging the Truth*^a. Here you may take Notice, that this Adverb, *peradventure*, was not inserted, but upon Consideration that, *perhaps*, after all, they might not be persuaded, nor converted: And, if so, all that *Timothy* could do farther, was to leave them to the *Divine Judgment*; since, as for *Excommunication*, that could have no Effect upon those who were out of the Church; as the Apostle says in another Place,

^a 2 Tim. ii. 24, 25.

What have I to do to judge such as are without ; for those God judgeth ?

P. I will not deny, but that the Method you prescribe, is both more charitable, and seems more reasonable ; and am satisfied, that our *Jesuitical* Missionaries do gain more Converts to our Church by this Method, than if they were allowed to preach publicly ; and it must be acknowledged, that your *English* Ministers do much exceed them in that Talent of Preaching and Praying.

But, to draw towards a Conclusion with this Discourse, which has not yet brought me over to your *heretical* Opinions ; yet, I must indeed own, it has given me a clearer Light into some Matters ; as to the Right of every *Catholic* Prince to the Pretense of forcing his Subjects to be of his Religion by Civil Penalties ; and that those are not the Means prescribed by *Jesus Christ* to bring Men over to imbrace his Doctrine, and become true Subjects of *his Kingdom ; which is not* (properly speaking) *of this World* : Yet, give me Leave to tell you, I have one Objection more against your submitting to the Church of *England* ; unless you resolve for ever to renounce
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the absolute Subjection of your own *private Judgment* to her's in all Matters of Faith, by Virtue of that *Article* I cited at our first Conversation, which obliges you to believe, that the *Church* (*i. e.* this particular Church) *has not only Authority to decree Rites and Ceremonies, but also in Matters of Faith.* I shall not contend with you, whether she claims any *Infallibility*, or not ; but if she challenges absolute Authority in *Matters of Faith*, it must be from her supposed *Certainty* in all such Matters as she either has, or shall take upon her to determine. Now, if she has any such absolute Authority, you are not only bound to submit to it, but to believe it to be true, tho' it should seem ever so contrary to your *private Judgment* : Therefore, if she should hereafter determine, in her Synods and Convocations, the Manner of *Christ's* real Presence in the *Eucharist*, that it is his *very numerical Body*, in which he suffered, there present, after an invisible, tho' ineffable Manner, you, and every true Son of the Church of *England*, is bound to believe it to be so ; which Authority, whatever you may say to extenuate it, comes little short of that which the *Roman Church* does (tho'

upon much better Grounds) lay Claim to, as conferred upon her by *Christ* himself; who, not long before his Ascension, promised *St. Peter*, the Chief of his Apostles, and all the rest of them, as his Successors in the *Apostolical* Office, which he received from God his Father, that *he would be with them*; that is, in the same divine, supernatural Manner, *unto the End of the World*.

R. I have not Time now to return you such a full Answer to this Objection, as I would do; but at present shall only say, that we need go no farther than what the Church has already declared, in the Clauses immediately following that very Article: That she is so far from assuming any *infallible* Authority in *Matters of Faith*, that she does not so much as challenge so absolute a one as you would ascribe to her: And this is plain from those very Conditions and Limitations she herself has set to her own Authority, by the subsequent Clauses in this very Article, *viz.* “ Yet, it is not
 “ lawful for the Church to ordain any
 “ Thing which is contrary to God’s
 “ Word written; neither may it so ex-
 “ pound one Place of Scripture, as to
 “ make it repugnant to another. Where-
 I fore,

" fore, tho' the Church be a Witness
 " and Keeper of Holy Writ; yet, as it
 " ought not to decree any Thing against
 " the same; so, beside the same, it
 " ought not to inforce any to be be-
 " lieved for Necessity of Salvati-
 " on."

From whence I observe: *First*, That
 the Church then supposed, it was pos-
 sible, at some Time or other, for a cor-
 rupt Party of her Bishops to abuse this
 Authority; or, otherwise, these Limi-
 tations had been inserted to no Purpose.
Secondly, That, if any should happen
 thus to abuse her Authority, and decree
 any Thing contrary to God's written
 Word, or inforce any Article to be ne-
 cessarily believed beside the same, that then
 her Members should not be obliged to
 obey, or believe such Doctrines, or De-
 crees, relating either to *Faith* or *Pra-*
ctise: And, of this Abuse, she hereby
 makes all her present and future Mem-
 bers to be competent Judges, according
 to their *private Judgments*. So that,
 you may see, she does not hereby lay
 Claim to any *absolute*, much less to such
infallible Authority, as your Church pre-
 tends to; who obliges her Subjects to
 submit to, and believe her Traditions,

and forced Interpretations of Scripture, when they are directly contrary to the very Words and Meaning of the Text itself; as in the Doctrines of the Worship due to Images; praying to Angels and Saints; and the real Sacrifice of the Body of *Christ*, for the Sins both of the Living and the Dead; with divers others, I could mention.

These Limitations being thus settled; it is very evident, that the Church can challenge no other Authority from this Article, than that of determining such Points as remain still doubtful, thro' the Obscurity of the Texts brought to prove them, which may bear different Senses, without any Repugnancy to other Places of Scripture, or Diminution of any of *Christ's* Precepts by him expressly enjoined: And, in these Cases, I think it the Duty of all good Sons of the Church to submit to such Interpretation, either in *Faith* or *Practise*, as she shall think fit to determine; since they ought to submit their Judgments to that of so many learned and pious Men, in such mystical Points, rather than break her Peace and Unity by endless Disputes, and Contentions about Matters not absolutely Necessary to be believed one Way or other,
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in order to their eternal Salvation: For, whatever is absolutely necessary to that, is already so plainly declared in Scripture, that the most ignorant (if they will make that good Use of their own Reasons and Judgments, which they ought) can be no more mistaken than the most learned.

But, What need I farther insist on a Matter so evident from the very Words and Purport of this Article, that the Church never by it intended to *domineer* over Mens *Faith* by any *absolute* Authority? Therefore, whenever any Man shall find his own *private* Thoughts and Conscience to differ from the public Determination of the Church, he ought to examine the Matter over again with due Attention and Care, freeing himself from all Prejudice and Obstinacy, by a due Distrust of his own Understanding, and with humble Deference to the Judgment of his Superiors; this is due to the Considerations of Peace and Unity, and to that Authority which the Church has to maintain it in all such less-necessary Matters: So that, after all possible Means of Inquiry, if a Man cannot so master his own Thoughts, as to make them agree with such public Decisions,

his Conscience is not under Bonds in that Respect, provided he does not, by open Preaching or Writing, contradict those Determinations, to the Disturbance of other Mens Minds in Matters not necessary to Salvation ; since this Authority is not *absolute*, nor grounded upon a Promise of *Infallibility*, whereto no national Church whatever can pretend.

And, for the Proof of this *Christian Liberty*, I need but appeal to any Man's *private Conscience*, let him be either *Calvinist*, or *Arminian* : As supposing, that the Church, in the XVIIth *Article* concerning *Predestination*, had expressly determined either on the one Side or the other (as she is now thought to have left it indifferent) whether the Maintainers of those Opinions, keeping both to the Church-Communion, could have really believed themselves absolutely obliged, upon that Determination, to have quitted their former Sentiments, and to have immediately subscribed to the Truth and Certainty thereof.

For, indeed, both Parties might still keep their own *private Judgments* in all such undecided Points ; since it is certain, “ That, as we owe our Hopes of
“ Salva-

“ Salvation only to *Christ*, and what
 “ he has done and suffered for us; so
 “ must it belong to him alone to fix the
 “ Terms upon which we may expect it.
 “ Nor can any Power on Earth clog the
 “ Offers which he makes, in the *Gos-*
 “ *pel*, with new, or other Terms than
 “ those which he has there made for
 “ us.”

To conclude what I have to say upon
 this Head, I think, there can be no far-
 ther Dispute about this; unless we be-
 lieve, “ That there is such *infallible* Au-
 “ thority lodged in the Church to ex-
 “ plain the Scripture, and declare what
 “ Traditions she pleases: And farther,
 “ except we believe the Scriptures are
 “ both obscure and defective, and must
 “ be helped by some *infallible* Com-
 “ mentary, and supplied by some au-
 “ thentical Declaration of such Tradi-
 “ tions, we cannot add Authority to
 “ any Church whatsoever, whether uni-
 “ versal or national, either to contra-
 “ dict the Scripture, or to annex any
 “ necessary Conditions of Salvation to
 “ it.^b”

^b See more to this Purpose in Bishop *Burnet's* Expo-
 sition of the XXth Article, p. 197.

And

And now, in my Opinion, I need say no more in Answer to all your Objections ; but that, since *Jesus Christ* has not left any such *absolute* Judge over Mens Consciences, positively to determine of their future State after this Life ; so long as they continue to believe all the fundamental Doctrines, and observe the Precepts, contained in both the *Testaments* : And no Powers upon Earth, neither Ecclesiastical nor Civil, have any Authority given them by *Christ* to force their Consciences to believe what they cannot be convinced is required, or commanded by God, as necessary Terms of Salvation ; and consequently, that he has not appointed any *infallible Interpreters* of his Doctrines and Laws, which all *Christians* are bound implicitly to own for true ; for that would be to set themselves up in *Christ's* Stead, and so to usurp upon his *spiritual Kingdom*, which does no Way depend upon any temporal Rewards and Punishments, but upon those which are eternal, and which are not to commence 'till this Life is ended ; according as he himself has declared to his Apostles : *Fear not them which can kill the Body, but fear him who can cast both Body and Soul into Hell.*

P. Well!

P. Well! I find by all our Discourse, that you are very staunchly of the *Low-Party*, and a *Free-Thinker*; and it is no Wonder then, that one of your *Latitudinarian* Principles has quitted the true *Catholic* Church, to join with a mere *Parliamentary* Establishment, which at first owed its Origin to some Mens *private Judgments*: Therefore, as to this present national Church, I cannot justly blame those who use the same Liberty in following theirs, and upon Pretense (at least) of new *Light*, or better Information, use their own *private Judgments* in leaving her Communion; or else so many, who were baptized and educated in that Church, could never have forsaken her to become *Presbyterians*, *Anabaptists*, and be of other worse Sects, I could name. Neither will I condemn those you term *High-Church* Divines, for endeavoring so far to imitate our Church, in ascribing such *absolute* Authority to their own, as to oblige all Persons of this Nation, under severe Penalties, to embrace her Communion, by denouncing *Eternal Damnation* if they do not. Therefore, I must own, as a *Free-Thinker*, you have very well exposed the Vanity of their
Pre-

Pretences, except they could prove (which you say they do not pretend to) that their Church is infallible. I believe they would give you but very little Thanks, should you publicly offer to declare, and propagate this Tenet, *That every one has a Right to chuse what Religion he will be of, be it right or wrong.*

R. This is none of my Tenets ; except you can suppose me so senseless, as to maintain a Man has a Right to be in the Wrong : But this, I think, I may very well maintain (as I did in our first Conversation) that every Man must be left to chuse his own Religion, or else must blindly submit to some other Man, or Body of Men, to chuse it for him ; and they must either have made that Choice upon their own *private Judgment*, or have depended on that of some others ; and so upwards, *in infinitum*, for ought I can see to the contrary. But, as for the Consequence, which I own must follow from this Liberty, I think, it is nothing near so bad, as your *absolute, implicit Faith* : For, upon that Ground, a *Mahometan* shall be as much obliged to continue in that false Belief, in which he has been educated, as any one

one shall be in that you call the *Catholic Church*.

And, as for the Danger a Man may fall into, who, being already of the only true Religion, should quit that for a false one ; that must be at his Peril, since God is not bound to make Men *infallible* in the Choice of their Religion, which ought to be the Act of their *free Will*, guided by the best Use they can make of their Understandings ; which, if it be not exerted as it should be, the Consequences of this can be no worse than the general Corruption there is in the World, from the evil Use of the Will, in following the Lusts and Motions of the Flesh, and the Damnation which follows those Sins ; and yet, God permits it, because he has created us free Agents. Nor can any Reason be given, why we should be more restrained in the Use of our *Understanding*, than we are in the Use of our *Wills* ; or, why God should make it less possible for us to fall into Errors, than it is to commit Sins^c. The *Wrath* of God is as much denounced against Men who hold the Truth in *Unrighteousness*^d, as against other Sins. And

^c See Bishop Burnet on the XIXth Article, p. 183, 184.

^d Rom. i. 18.

it is reckoned among the heaviest of Curses, *to be given up to strong Delusions to believe a Lie^e.*

In fine, as to myself, whom you blame for having followed my own *private Judgment*, in leaving your *Catholic* (or rather *French* national) Church, and joining in Communion with this of *England*, I need but ask you, Whether I ought to return again to the former? If you answer (as you must) in the Affirmative; I would next ask you, Upon what Grounds I ought to do so? If you say, By considering over again all the Arguments commonly made Use of to prove the Truth of that Religion, and the *Infallibility* of that Church above any other; then I reply, How can I be convinced of this, but by my own *private Judgment*, which must inform my Will, that I was mistaken in leaving it for that I now profess? Therefore, in Respect to myself, as I have proceeded in this Change according to the best of my *Judgment*, upon due Consideration of all the Arguments, which I find brought for, or against it, and in the doing of which I earnestly implored

God's *assisting Grace*: So, I hope, having obtained it, I shall always continue, by the same Grace and Assistance, a true Member of that Church, to which I have now joined myself: But, if God should permit me to turn from it to some other *Christian* Communion, as I shall never do, but on the like full Conviction; and consequently, with the like Sincerity of Heart: So, if I should happen to be mistaken therein, I hope God will commiserate the *Weakness* of my *Judgment*; and for which I am sure none but God, the Searcher of all Hearts, has any Right to question, or condemn me for it: But, since you insist so much upon the *Infallibility* of the *Romish* Church, as I have seriously inquired and considered all that can be said for it, so I am ready to discourse with you again upon that important Point, whenever you please.

P. I thank you, *Sir*; but you need not give yourself, or me, any farther Trouble; for I find it would be to no Purpose to argue any more with so obstinate a *Heretic*; and therefore, will bid you Adieu for good and all.

F I N I S.

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